BRITAIN'S LEADING HISTORICAL RAILWAY JOURNAL

BackTrack

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2582
SIR HUGO

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- THE RISE AND FALL OF SPEEDLINK
- BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS AND THE BOER WAR
- THE SCOTTISH QUARTET IN COLOUR

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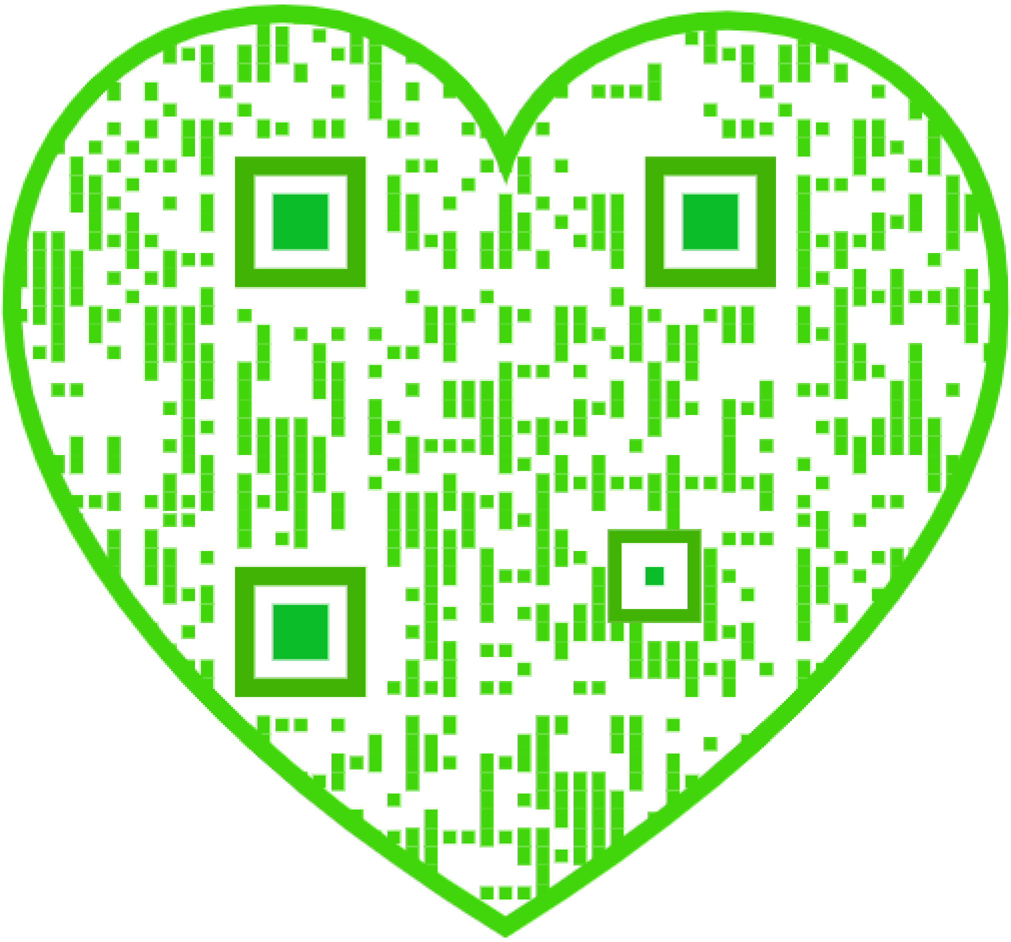

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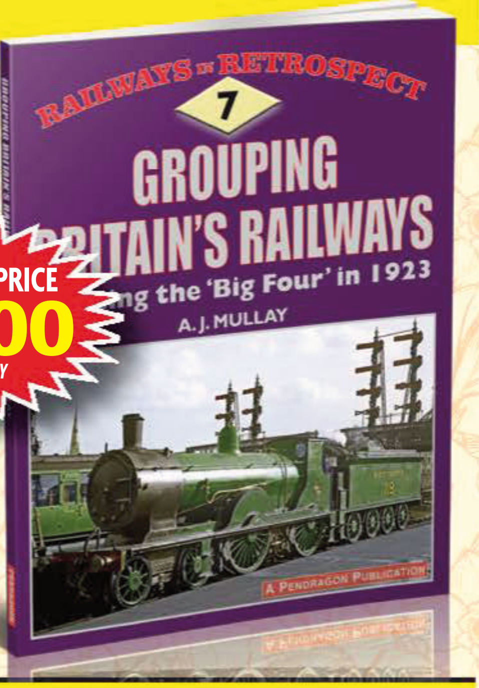

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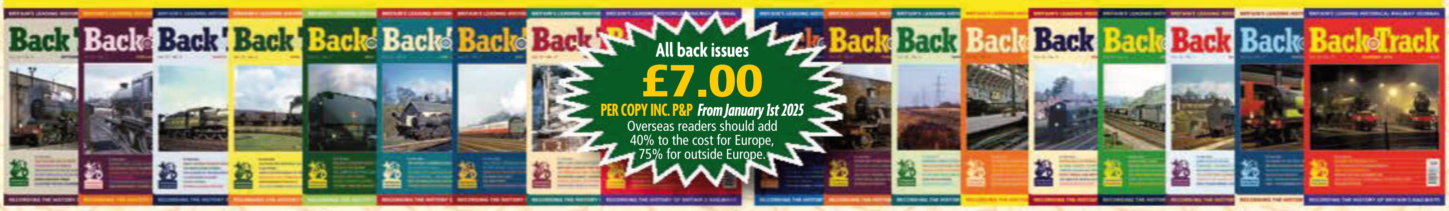

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Editorial

BackTrack
RECORDING THE HISTORY OF BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS
Vol. 39 · No. 4
No. 408
APRIL 2025

A taste of things to come . . .

Next month we are back on Shap for the magnificent spectacle of raw steam power at Shap where steam-hauled passenger and freight trains battled their way to the famous summit in the Westmorland fells. A colour feature depicting Shap through the seasons will open the May issue, so to whet your appetite...

Towards the end of steam the bulk of the 'Britannias' congregated at Carlisle Kingmoor shed for working freight and van trains along the West Coast Main Line and in the summer months they were out in force on holiday extras. On 21st April 1965 No.70048 *The Territorial Army 1908-1958* heads a heavy northbound freight near Scout Green with a 2-6-4T pushing heartily at the rear. No.70048 was a nomadic locomotive, spending time allocated to Holyhead, Newton Heath and Willesden sheds before gravitating to Carlisle. (Dr. Ian Cantlon)

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LNER A3 Pacific No.2582 *Sir Hugo*, resplendent in a new coat of post-war apple green livery, at Grantham in August 1946. (C. C. B. Herbert/NRM/Colour-Rail.com NE204)

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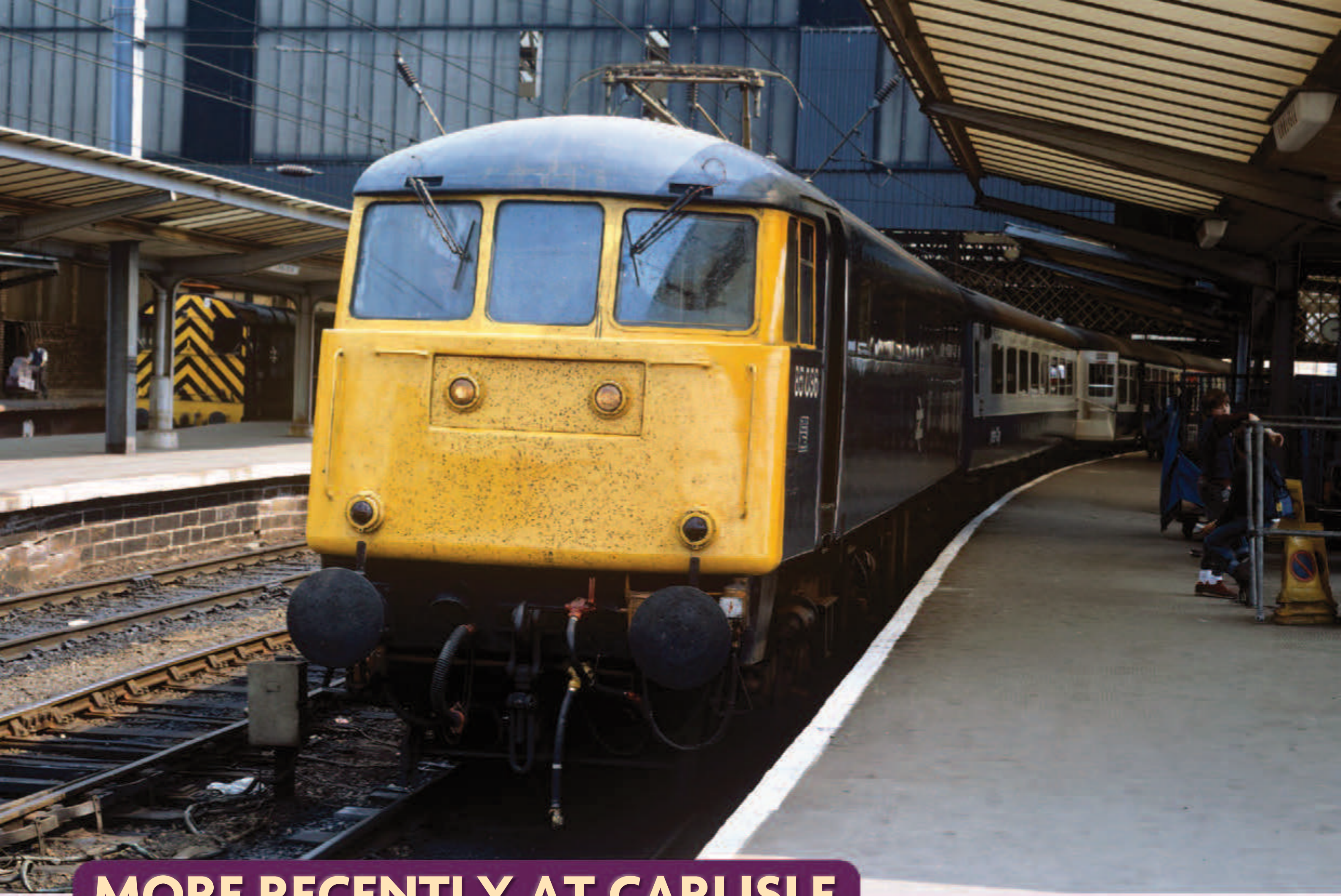
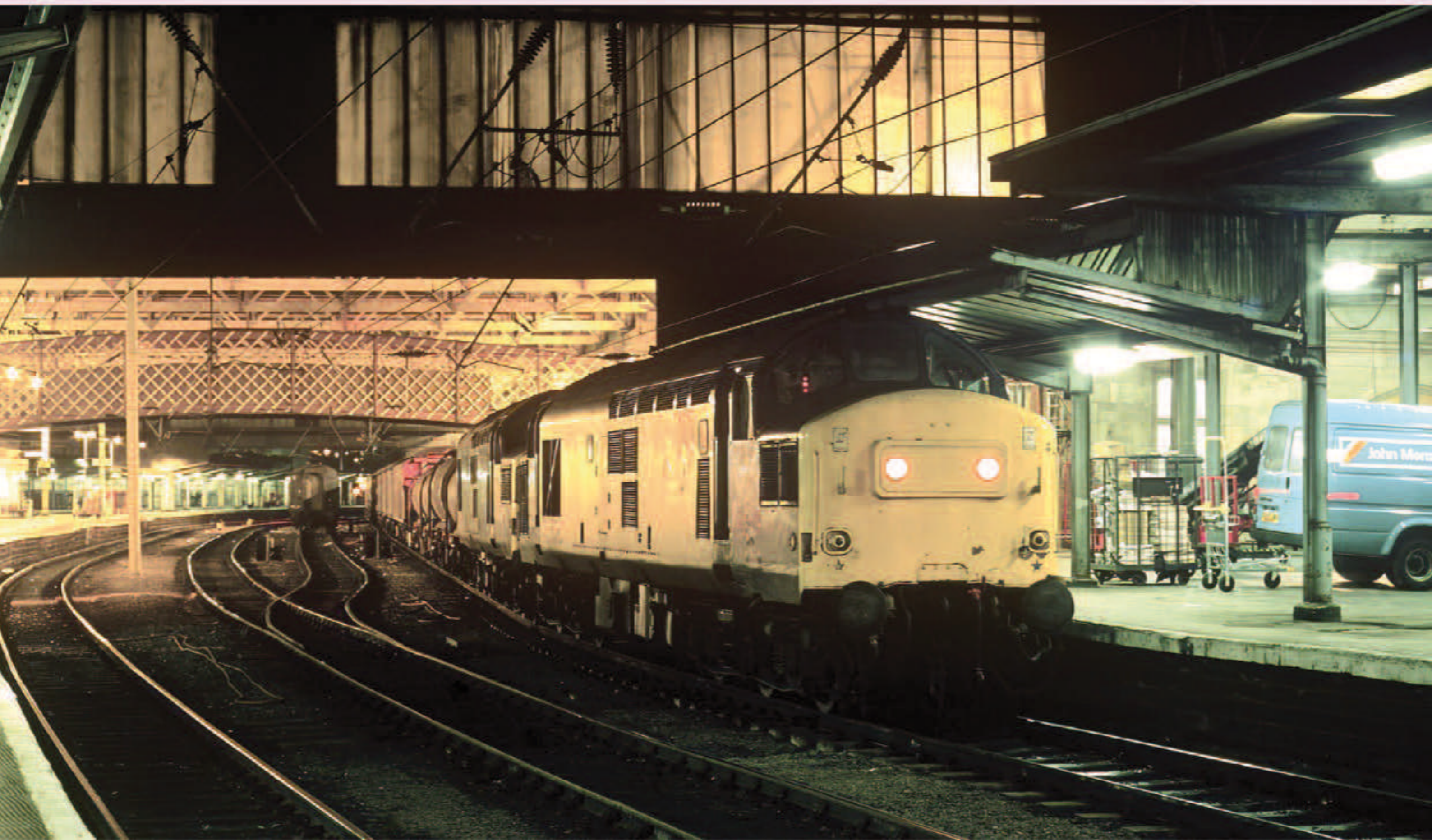


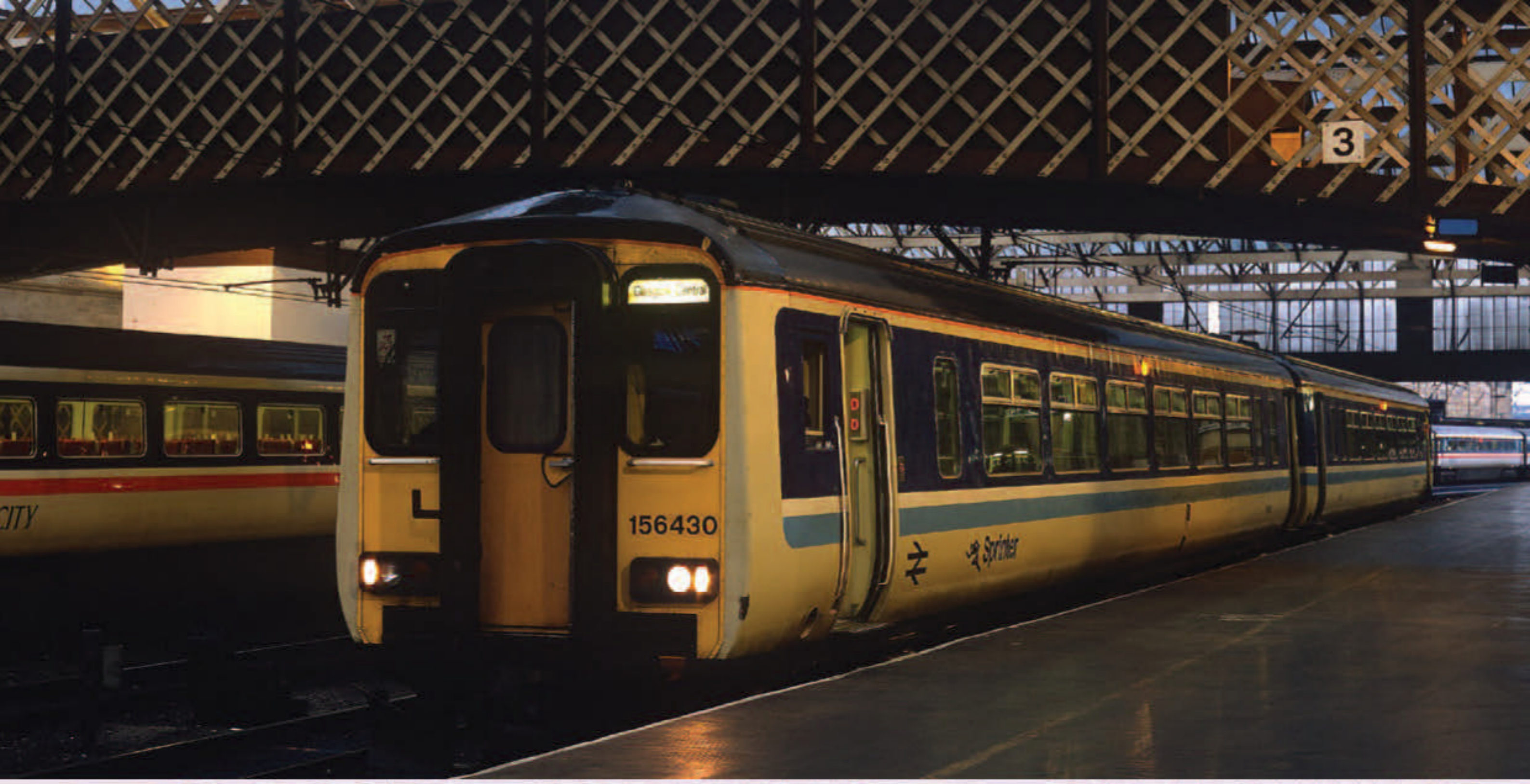
MORE RECENTLY AT CARLISLE

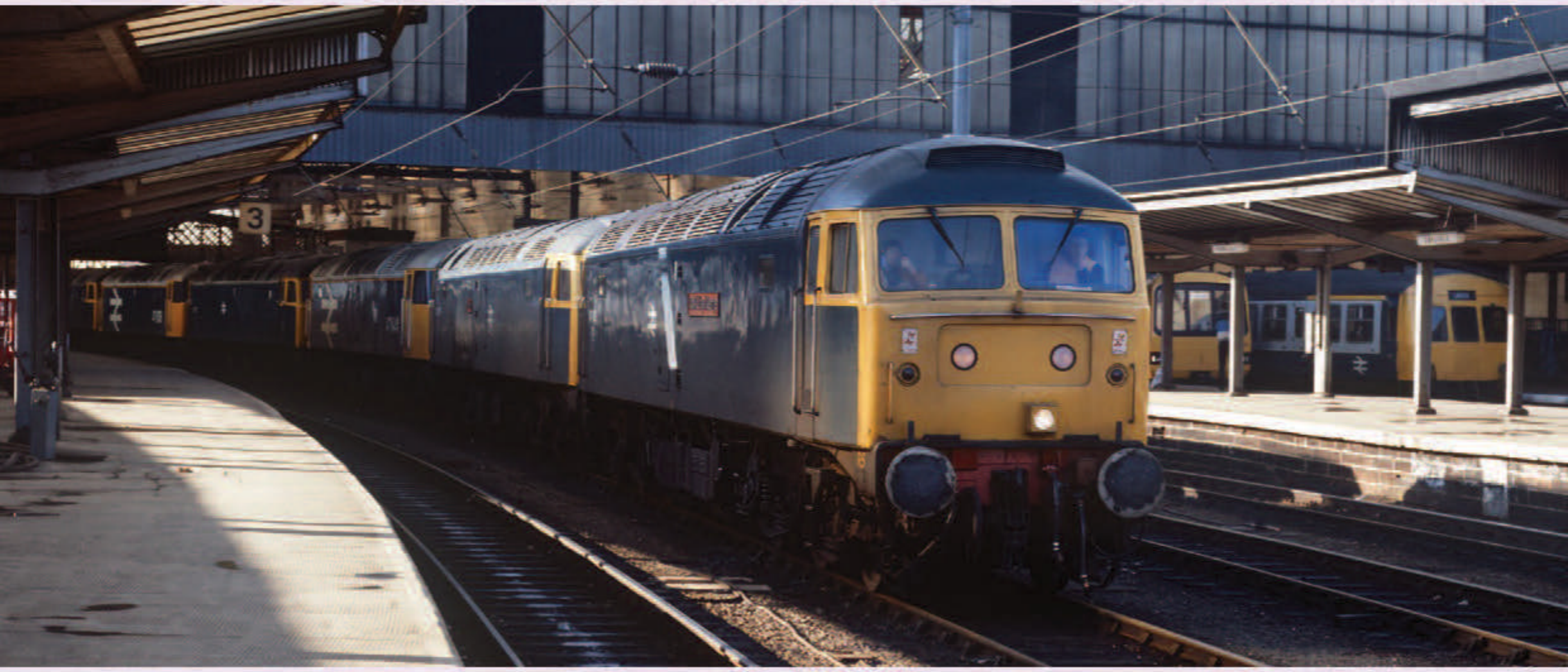
Last month we featured steam at Carlisle in the 1960s. These photographs by **KEITH DUNGATE** take us forward to the 1980s – but over 30 years ago now!!

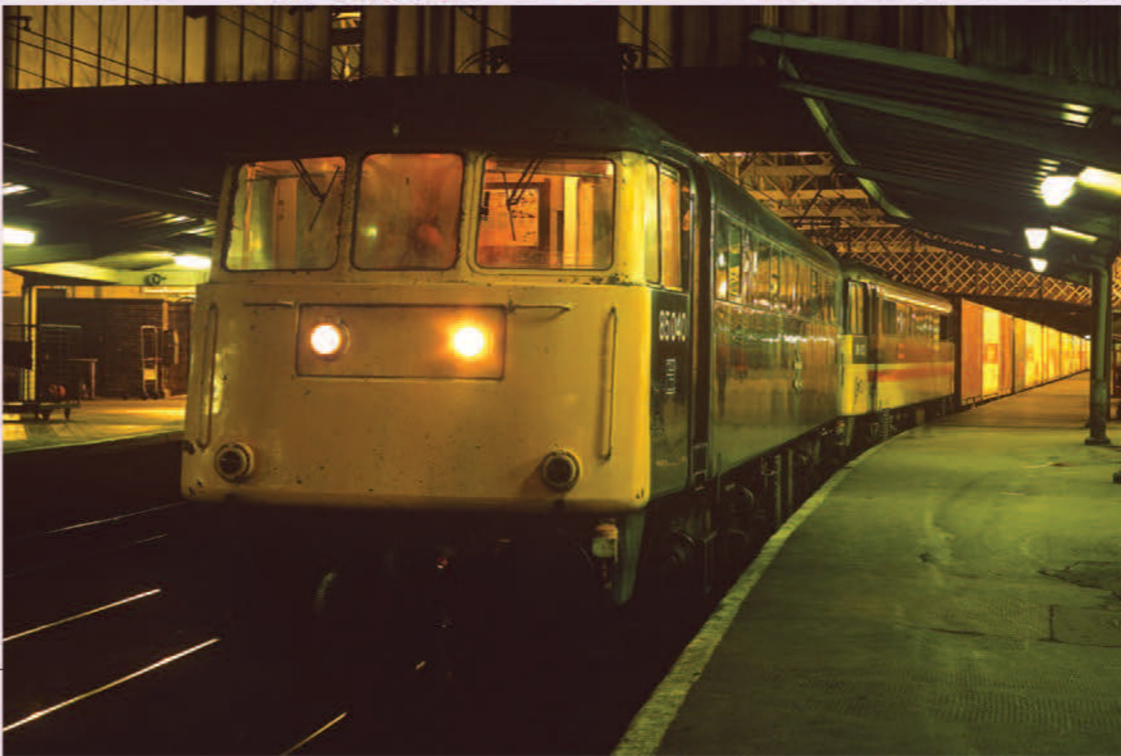
ABOVE: **The great era of locomotive-hauled West Coast Main Line electrics. Having arrived at Carlisle well spattered with dead insects, Class 85 No.85 036 waits to head north from at Carlisle with the 09.15 London Euston–Inverness on Thursday 30th May 1985.**

BELOW: **Carlisle Citadel station saw plenty of night-time activity. Bathed in a yellow glow from the roof lights, Tinsley-allocated Class 37s Nos.37 298 and 098 make an on time stop for a crew change with the 21.50 Tyne Yard–Stranraer Town Yard Speedlink freight on Thursday 5th October 1989. A John Menzies van awaits the newspapers.**





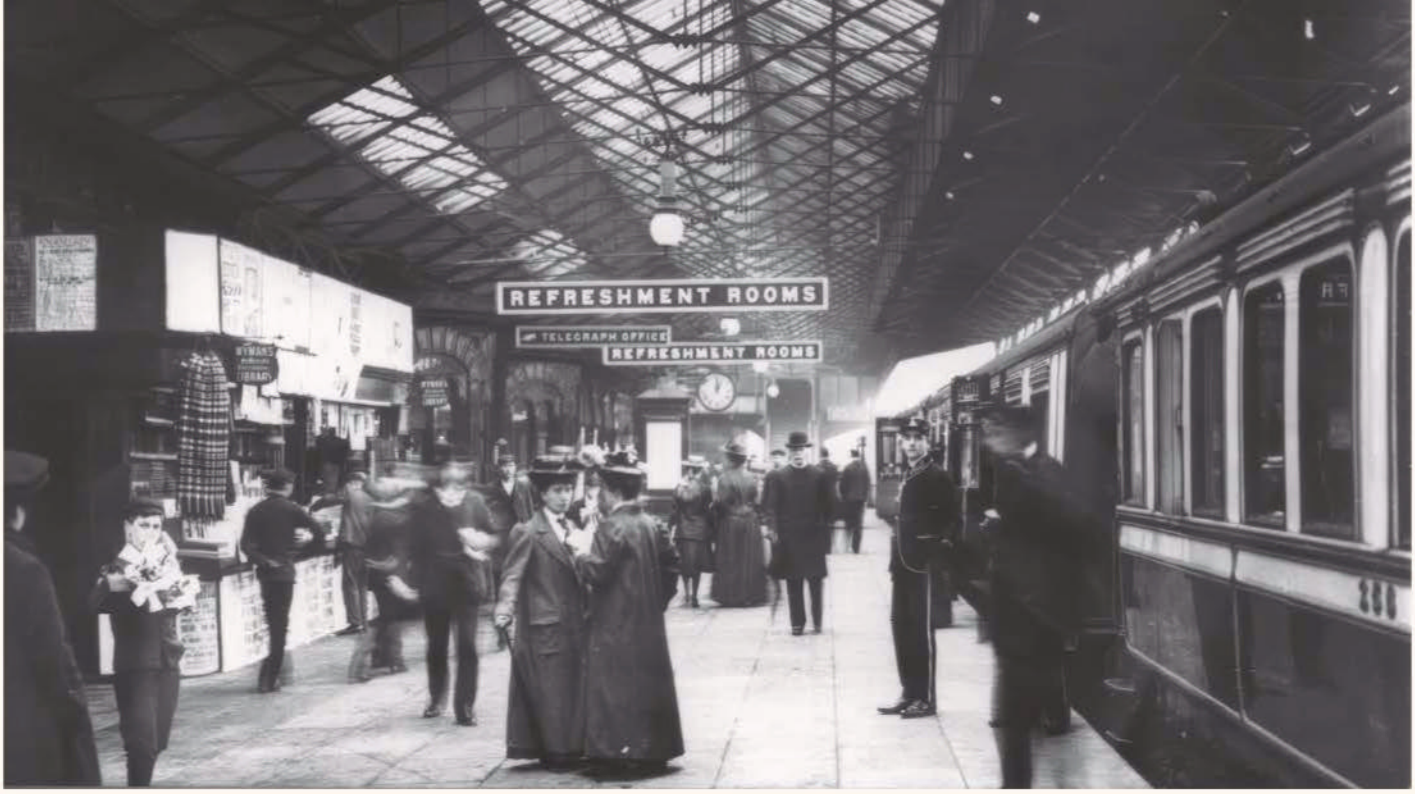




TOP: **Regional Railways 'Sprinter' No.156 430 calls at Carlisle's Platform 3 as the 06.30 Newcastle–Glasgow Central via Dumfries and the G&SW route on Friday 6th October 1989.**

ABOVE: **An array of Class 47s Nos.47 409 *David Lloyd George,* 47 509 *Albion*, 47 640, 47 571, 47 638 and 47 442 waits at Carlisle to work diverted West Coast Main Line services via Settle to Preston due to engineering works on Sunday 30th March 1986.**

RIGHT: **Nos.85 040 and 86 633 *Wulfruna* wait at Carlisle for a crew change on Friday 6th October 1989, hauling the 21.47 (Thursday 5th) Crewe Basford Hall–Glasgow Gushetfaulds Freightliner Terminal container train (4S50).**



A busy scene at Crewe station. Platform 1 South was the subject of this photograph, c1910. The wide platform allows the gathering of travellers and station staff (one of whom stands to attention). Wyman's bookstall offers items of clothing (a scarf is on display) in addition to the usual fare of books and magazines. (John Alsop Collection)

'THE HUB OF THE SYSTEM' OF CREWE: 1867–1913

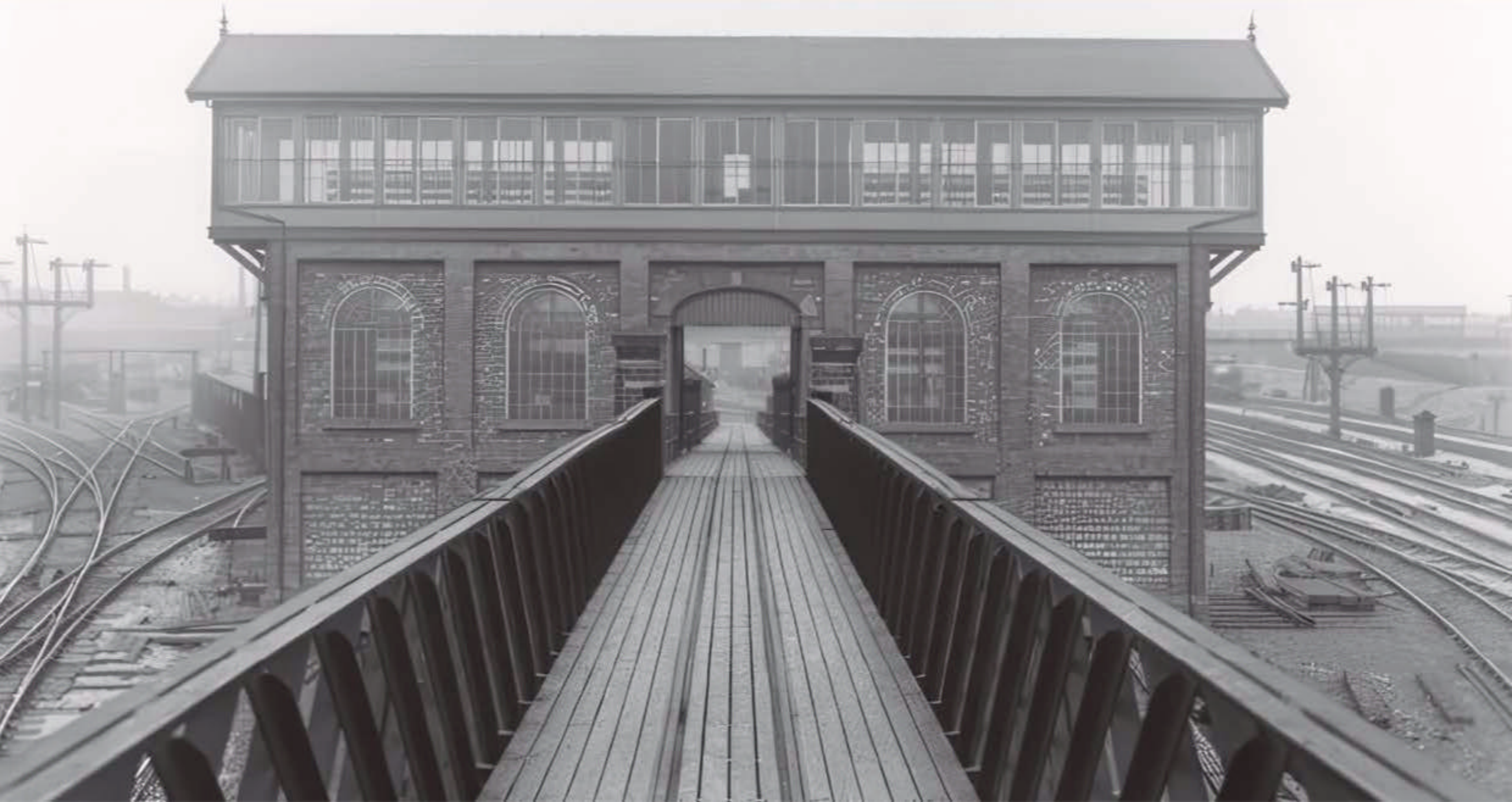
BY JEFFREY WELLS

Perusal of an early nineteenth century map of Cheshire will show the dominance of Crewe as a focus of six company lines. The Grand Junction Railway opened a passenger station on 4th July 1837. William H. Chaloner, noted in his book, *The Social and Economic Development of Crewe,* that the choice of location for the works possessed few advantages:

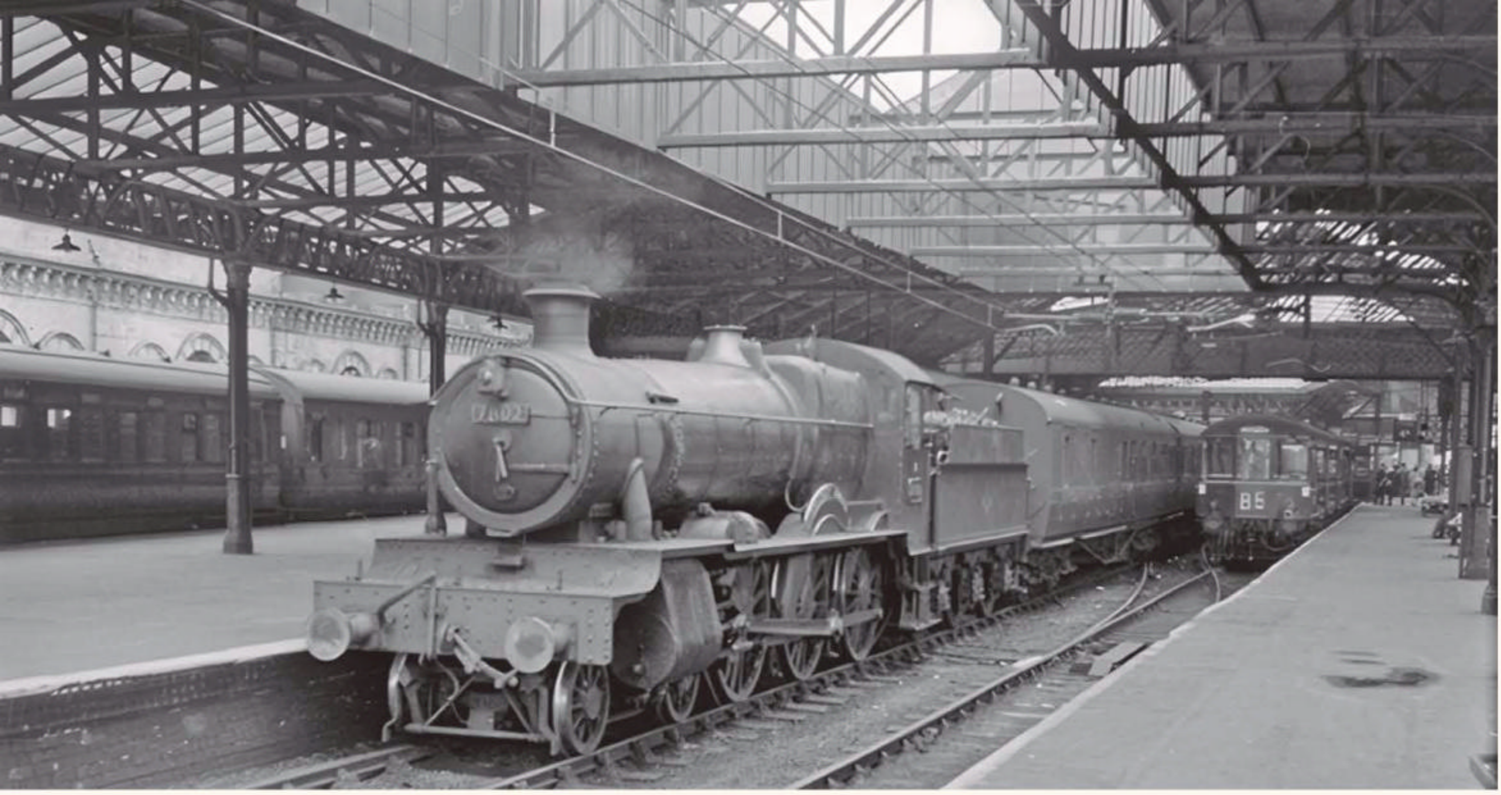
"The Crewe district had no appreciable waterpower, no iron ore deposits, [and] no coal mines. The decision to remove the locomotive, coach and wagon departments of the Grand Junction Railway from Edgehill [Liverpool] to the deep rural surroundings of Crewe must have been dictated by its central position on a railway network".

On opening, Crewe station comprised "a very neat house for the clerk of the station, together with an engine-house, with an engine always ready for use". Chaloner also noted that the original station was rebuilt by the London & North Western Railway in 1845/6 in order to cope with the increase in traffic. The rebuilt station was "a magnificent structure… with offices waiting rooms and even conveniences. The platforms are covered by an ornamental roof, supported by handsome cast pillars, surmounted by carved oak figures".

In his book *Rides on Railways,* Samuel



Crewe North signal box. Crewe Works operated an 18in gauge tramway which enabled equipment, tools and other goods to be transported around the various workshops and the passenger station. The connection between the Works and the station was by means of a narrow bridge known as the Spider Bridge. This view shows the tramway bedded in the planked footpath and its passage beyond the signal box via the arched opening. (Author's Collection)



A GWR interloper at Crewe station. Services between Crewe and Wellington, Shropshire, were common in the 1960s. Here we see 4-6-0 No.7802 *Bradley Manor* at the head of a train to Wellington. The train is awaiting departure in bay Platform 3. Adjacent to it is a local train in the form of a DMU. The varied structures of the roof can readily be seen in this view, taken by the late Ben Brooksbank.

A STUDY OF FIVE ASPECTS

Sidney is enthusiastic about the new railway town: “Crewe is a wonderful place; sixteen years ago [the book was published in 1851] it was a quiet country-village, now intersected in every direction with iron roads pointing from it to almost every point of the compass”.

Sidney enlarges upon this observation: “At present, besides the line formerly called the Grand Junction, until its amalgamation with the London & Birmingham, there is a line from Crewe to Chester and Birkenhead; another to Manchester direct, by Macclesfield, formerly known as the Manchester and Birmingham – both are now merged in the London and North Western; and lastly, a short cross branch of fifteen miles, forming a union with Burslem on the North Staffordshire”.

In 1858 the LNWR line to Shrewsbury set off in a south westerly direction from Crewe station, making six routes in total. Sidney acknowledged Crewe Works: “In addition to the bustle created by the arrival and departure of innumerable trains at Crewe, the London and North Western Company have a large establishment for building and repairing the locomotives, and other machinery in use on their line north of Birmingham”.

He then described its features: “The railway village of Crewe is on the same plan as that of Wolverton, but situated in much prettier scenery; and includes a church, infant boys’ and girls’ schools, a Library and Literary Institution, held in the Town-hall, where a fine room is occasionally well filled by popular lectures, and balls in the winter.”

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to five aspects of Crewe as a functioning railway station and engineering works, a major hub in the railway system. The following aspects are discussed:

1. The Station Improvements of 1867
2. The Jubilee Celebrations of 1887
3. The construction of the Independent Lines Tunnels 1895–1901 and the evelopment of Basford Hall freight facilities
4. The Station Improvements of 1890–1907
5 The Royal Visit of 1913

Improvements to the station in 1867

After 30 years of daily use, Crewe station required a major rebuild in order to accommodate the burgeoning amount of traffic it handled daily. This was accomplished early in 1867. An excellent overview appeared in the *Chester Chronicle* of 23rd February, not only describing the chief features of the rebuild, but also casting a critical eye upon the end result.

Minor changes had taken place before this, however. One such was regarded as long overdue and a great asset to the travelling public. Under the simple heading ‘Crewe Station’, readers were informed that “There have recently been erected at this station, to supply a want long felt, two public drinking fountains, which will undoubtedly prove an immense boon to the thousands who have to pass this busy spot of the London and North Western Railway system. The fountains are let into the wall and built of polished marble. They are placed one at each side of the station, so that arrivals and departures can alike be accommodated without the risk of crossing the rails. The water supplying them is that from the Madeley Waterworks, which are distant about seven miles and a half from the station.”

Under the headline ‘THE NEW RAILWAY STATION AT CREWE’, the *Chester Chronicle* gave a full account of the rebuilt station, beginning with the following paragraph: “The handsome edifice erected as a railway station at Crewe was opened last week. There was no ceremony to mark the event, but simply a transfer of the activity of a first-class railway station from the north to the south side of the bridge which carries the Northwich road across the line, leaving the former scene of bustle a deserted solitude prior to its speedy demolition.”

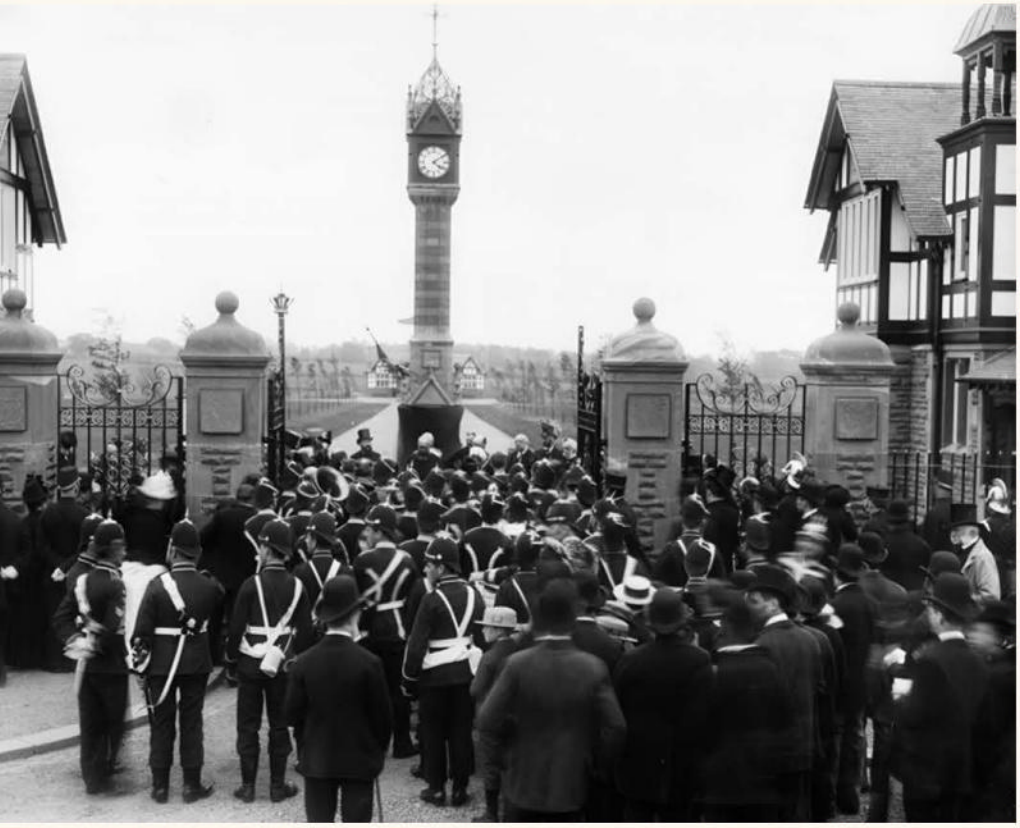
The account referred to the convergence of the six railways at the station and to the additional traffic the convergence generated. Not only was there heavy through traffic, there was also the Works, which generated its own traffic movements, especially shunting. Crewe was the “home or resting place of the steam engine which enter the station”. Accurate notes had been compiled in 1864 where it was found “that a thousand and one engines passed through the station in twenty-four hours”.

The rate of renewal at the station “has been very great and very rapid”. The old station was handed over to the contractor for destruction. Despite the handsome ornamental attributes, its stained glass windows, and other conveniences, there were two major deficiencies that spelled its demise: want of space and insufficient accommodation, added to which was the inferior lighting. The bridge carrying Nantwich Road over the railway was lengthened at both ends, “and two new openings made so as to extend the platforms north of the present station”.

In the rebuilt station, “ the main lines run straight through the centre as at Stafford, and are open to the sky, an arrangement which greatly diminishes smoke and steam in a station, and increases the light”. The lines carrying the stopping trains approached the two platforms under cover; the platforms were also roofed over. These stopping platforms measured 95 feet by 34 feet wide, “the roofs leaving about 65 feet at each end uncovered”. There were two bays served by double lines on either side of the station. The bay traffic either terminated at or departed from Crewe.

When this account was written, the bays at the north end were unmade because it was necessary to remove the old station. Between the bays were platforms 270 feet long at the south end, and which were to be 360 feet long at the north end of the station.

Goods traffic was to pass at the rear of the



The crowded entrance to Queen's Park was photographed on the opening day, 4th July 1887. The entrance was dominated by a clock tower whose fingers indicate the time is ten minutes past four. On the extreme left and right are two park lodges, exhibiting Tudor style timbers. Somewhere in the crowd of people was the Duke of Sutherland, who represented Queen Victoria, and a bevy of bigwigs: the Bishop of Chester, Sir Richard Moon (the LNWR Chairman) and F. W. Webb, who masterminded the donation of the park to the town. (John Alsop Collection)

station, on the west side and a goods station erected on the same side. Thus the planning of the rebuilt station envisioned the complete segregation of passenger traffic and goods traffic.

Platforms were paved with black and red quarries [square tiles], "the surface being considerably rounded to keep them dry". The platforms were very extensive, the main part being 820 feet long, "whilst those which cover the south bays are 80 feet, whilst those across the north bays, 70 feet span". The roofs were supported by cast iron pillars, which were surmounted by cast trellised girders from which the roofs sprang. The trellis girders were of wrought angle-iron with round tie-rods. We are informed that the roof substructure was painted "in appropriate and harmonious colours". A large proportion of the station roof was glass, which made the whole station "extremely light". A subway 230 feet long by 10 feet wide enabled travellers to reach the desired platform. The main station entrance faced Nantwich Road. The new station possessed ample cellarage, a large kitchen and scullery, plus storage space.

The *Chronicle's* account also included the principal persons who were engaged in the rebuild. Designer: J. B. Stansby, Chief Engineer: William Baker, Superintendent of works: G. Jenner, Contractors: Messrs. Parnell, Son & Bennett of Rugby, Ironwork and roof: P. D. Bennett of West Bromwich, terra cotta supplied by Messrs. Gibbs & Canning of Fazeley, bricks supplied by Messrs. Burton & Son of Ironbridge.

The supply of water "which appears to be ample… is obtained from Whitmore, where it is raised by pumping into a large reservoir at Madeley, whence it flows by its own gravity".

The account concluded with the following passage: "The station is comparatively but a small part of the work going on at Crewe. At present the line to Chester passes through the centre of the works, and by the steel works. This necessarily, from the large traffic to those works, occasions considerable interference with the through traffic, to avoid which, a deviation line, about a mile in length to the west, is being made by Mr. Moss, of Stafford, which, when completed, will take the through traffic, leaving that part of through the works, for their exclusive service."

This deviation line was a precursor of the Independent Lines, these to be described later. Along the course of the deviation line, Messrs. Parnell, Son & Bennett erected new workshops and modified existing buildings.

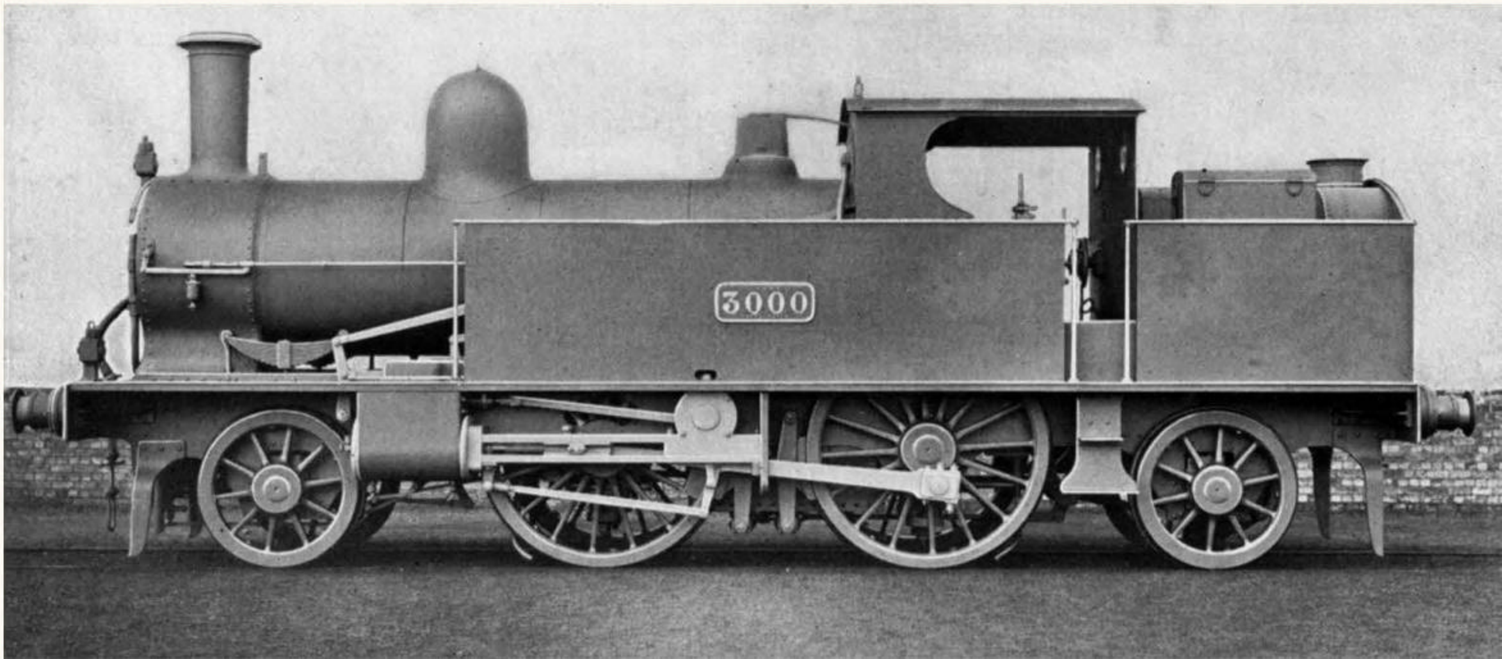
The anniversary celebrations of 1887

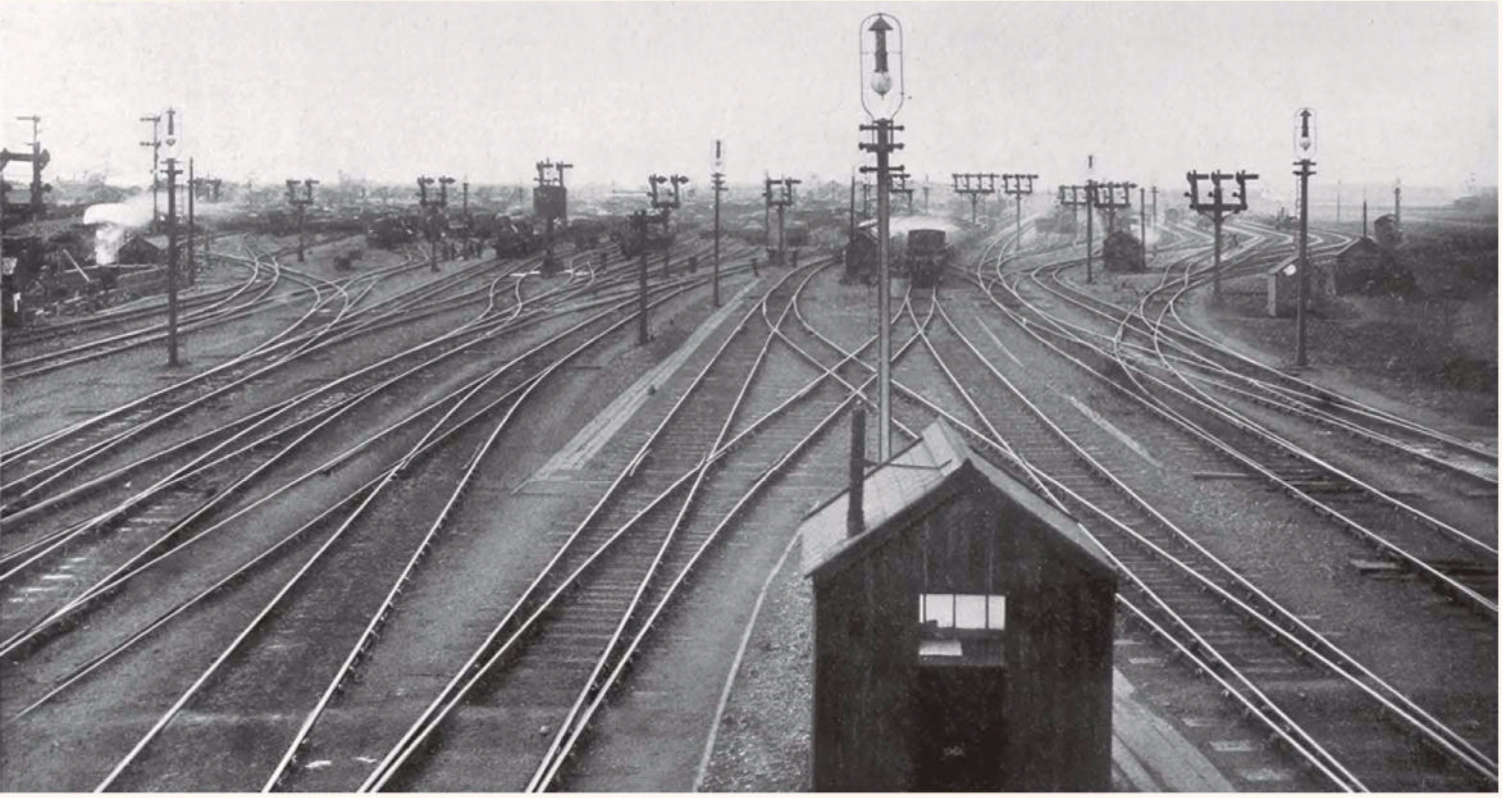
The young Princess Victoria succeeded to the throne on 20th June 1837, consequent on the death of King William IV. This was reason enough to celebrate 50 years later throughout the country. Crewe had more than one reason to celebrate and was decorated with flags and bunting in June 1837. Even so, the celebrations of June 1887 were of a limited nature; the main celebration, the real Jubilee, was to take place in early July.

The Crewe Chronicle, 25thJune 1887, noted that "it is close upon 50 years since Crewe was created, its creation practically dating from the opening of the Grand Trunk line, which was speedily followed by the removal of the London and North Western Works from Edge Hill to Crewe".

Although the 4th July was to mark the 50th anniversary of the passage of the first

The 3,000th engine to be completed at Crewe Works was 2-2-2-2 compound tank No.600 in June 1887. It was temporarily given its works number 3000 for display at the Queen's Park on its opening. (Pendragon Collection)





train into Crewe station, "it was decided that the old people should have a dinner on the 21st [June], and in response to invitations, about 700 names of persons, whose ages averaged 60 to 70, were received". The dinner was held in the Drill Hall, "which was gaily decorated for the occasion with flags and portraits of the Queen, etc".

A full account of the 4th July celebrations appeared in the *Leeds Mercury,* 5th July 1887. The town was described as being "elaborately decorated", with handsome arches stretched across the principal streets. There were at least three aspects arising from the so-called railway jubilee. A few weeks earlier, the Crewe Railway Engineer Volunteer Battalion had come into existence, numbering 600 of the smartest mechanics in the service of the London & North Western Railway Company. The Drill Hall, which had been the venue for the old folks' dinner party, had been provided by the railway company, with one of the company directors, Colonel Lloyd, as the colonel of the battalion.

A second aspect is reported in the same newspaper: "At the close of last week, the three-thousandth engine constructed at Crewe Works was completed". Tied in with this achievement the company cast a medal showing the three-thousandth engine on one side and Queen Victoria on the other. The medal was presented to all the workmen.

The third element concerned the railway company's gift of a large area of man-made parkland close to the southern periphery of the works. At a half-yearly meeting of the LNWR, held on 15th February 1887, "A short discussion took place upon a proposal to give to the Corporation of Crewe thirty acres of land and £10,000 for the public park in commemoration of the Queen"s Jubilee…". Thus it can be seen that the gift of a park had long been the railway company's intention.

The ground was named Queen's Park, which was dedicated to the inhabitants of Crewe. It was nearly a mile from the town centre, contiguous to a portion of the works, and could be approached via Willaston Road "For several months past the company's men have been laying it out, and, although still very far from complete, yet the present is regarded as the most favourable opportunity that offered for its dedication." The park was to have two lodges and several kiosks, ornamental waters with fowl, and boat houses and boats.

Consequent of this generous gift, the Corporation showed its appreciation by conferring the first honorary freedom of the borough upon Sir Richard Moon, Bart*. In *Railway Reminiscences,* G. P. Neele notes that a grand banquet was given at the works. "Jubilee medals were delivered to the officers. Rain unfortunately somewhat spoilt the procession arranged in connection with the opening of the park – twenty-eight acres of ground given by the company, increased to forty acres by the generosity of adjoining landowners".

*Richard Moon was conferred a baronetcy on 22nd July 1887.

The railway company granted a day's holiday to its employees, or an extra day's pay for those compelled to work. On 4th July a large number of special trains brought many visitors during the afternoon, soon swelling the crowds of people already in the town.

The Independent Goods Lines and Basford Hall Sidings

In 1893 a survey revealed that out of a thousand trains which passed through the station every 24 hours, half of them were goods trains that did not stop at the station. A second survey taken at the Christmas 1897, between 21st and 24th December, showed that "the trains passing through Crewe, in both directions, totalled 1,165 at the northern end, and 1,093 at the southern end of the station. The *Huddersfield Chronicle,* 7th January 1898, observed that "the arrangements which have hitherto sufficed have become too restricted". Goods and passenger trains ran freely over the same lines: it was this free-for-all that was the root cause of congestion, added to which was the shortage of platform space.

Basford Hall Sidings. Less than a mile to the south of Crewe station a vast area of freight sidings, a transit shed, with rail links to Shrewsbury and the Potteries, and an integral part of the Independent Lines passing to the west of the station, occupied land in the Basford Hall area. The whole complex comprised many sidings, points and associated signalling. The photograph shows the spread of the area, which was sold to the LNWR by a Mr. Willett, of Shavington, who is said to have made a profit of £5,000 on the deal. (Author's Collection)

The LNWR Company decided that the only way to remove the daily bottleneck was to separate goods traffic from passenger traffic as it had done at Edge Hill, Liverpool. The two classes of traffic had to be kept apart. In the words of I. J. Glover, *Milepost 158 – The Story of Crewe and Its Railways* (Part 5) "Some brave soul came up with the idea of clearing away all the areas currently used by freight traffic on the west side and laying tracks down under North Junction to Liverpool and the north and to Manchester."

To this end, it was necessary to construct a goods-only line running parallel to the main lines through the station, following a course to the west of the station. One and three quarters of a mile to the south of the station the new goods line would leave the main line at Casey Bridge and run in a shallow cutting until passing through three tunnels beneath the main lines at the northern end. A useful description of the new arrangement of independent lines appeared in the *Westminster Gazette,* 20th May 1898:

"A goods train, for instance, arriving from London for the North will, instead of passing through Crewe Station, as now, leave the main line one and three quarters miles to the south [at Casey Bridge] and pass along a new goods line parallel to the west of the existing rail road. There will be two double lines of rails for through goods traffic, so that express goods trains, say from Manchester, Liverpool, or Holyhead, to London, or from Liverpool, or Manchester, to Birmingham, Cardiff, and Derby, and vice versa, may pass both without delay and without contact with the passenger service".

The Manchester tunnel was the longest at 1,248 yards: it accommodated up and down lines. The other two tunnels (960 yards long) accommodated a single down line to the North and Liverpool, and a single up line for goods trains from the North and Liverpool.

The *Westminster Gazette, op cit*, noted that "a considerable amount of tunnelling has to be done". During construction of the tunnels, some 2,000 navvies were employed on the so-called "big dig" [this term ringing typically American], the whole scheme down to Casey Bridge costing £500,000. Overall, this system of through goods lines, with associated sidings, was two and a half miles long and about half a mile in width. Work on the project began in 1896 and ended in 1901.

The goods yard had to be relocated to Basford Hall, almost two miles to the south, where a new transit shed was built to handle freight traffic. No.1 Steam Shed was also relocated to form Crewe South depot.

The construction of the cut-and-cover tunnels was difficult: each of the three bores were cut through ground that was made up of heavy boulder clay and through ground previously used for other LNWR purposes. The brickwork crowns of the tunnels were only a few feet below the surface. A good deal of supporting structures had to be employed. In the words of I. J. Glover, *op cit,* "Steel roofs were provided and the new whole area of trackwork spread with landfill from these cuttings before ballasting took place."

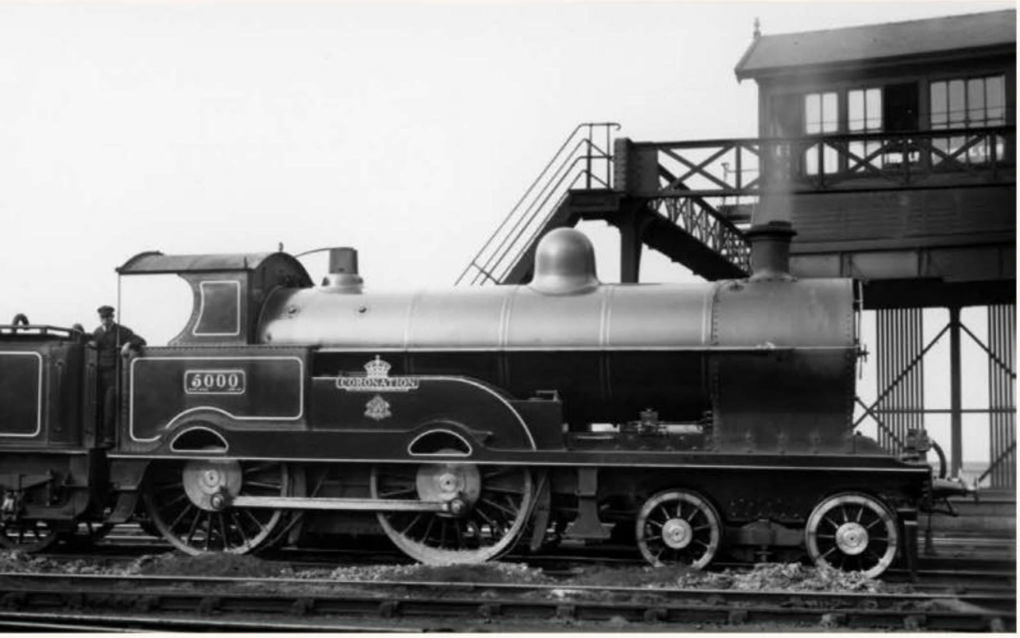
During the construction of the tunnels, normal traffic continued uninterrupted, the temporary steel girders supporting the surface lines. To add to the problems of support, care had to be taken with regards to the culvert bearing Valley Brook, a sizeable stream, culverted by the LNWR Company many years before. In the opinion of the *Westminster Gazette,* "The direction of the stream is therefore a ticklish piece of work which Mr. Footner and his resident assistant engineer Mr. Fowke, are now engaged in grappling with very successfully".

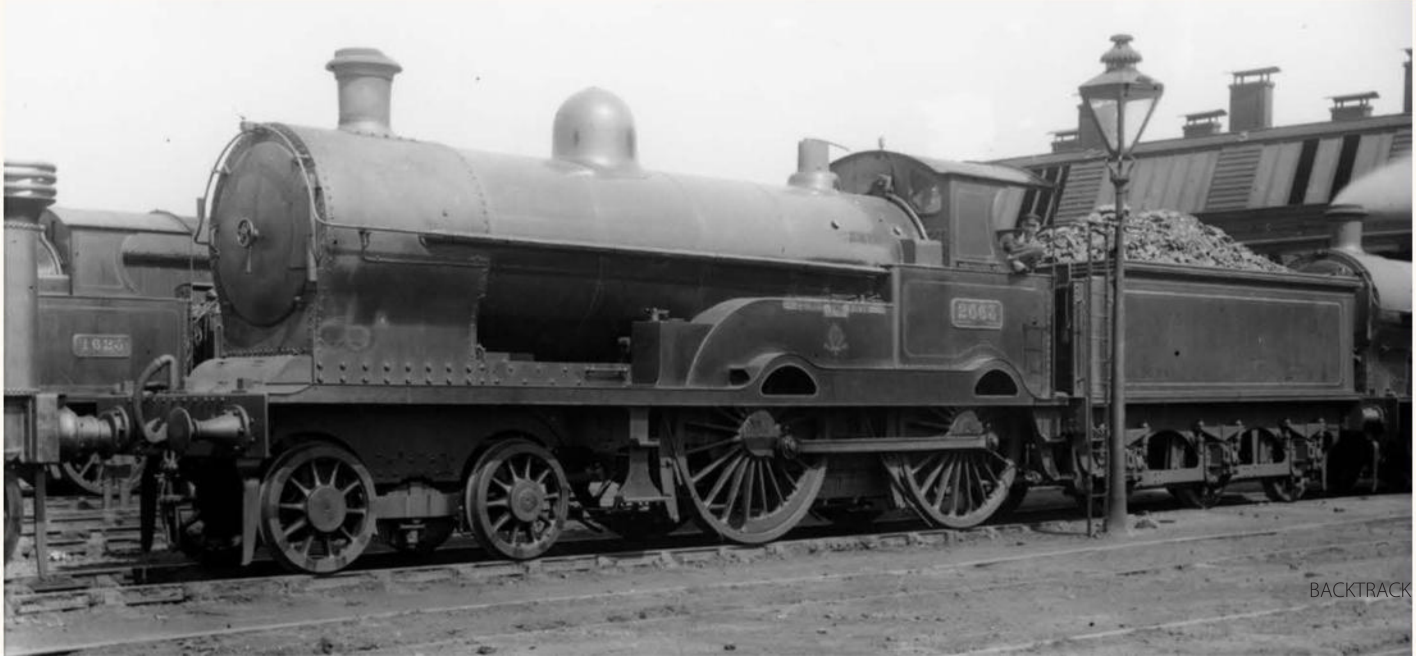
Newspaper reports fail to mention the names of the contractors involved in the work. The London & North Western Railway Society forwarded an opinion on the subject. It is thought that where work was remote from running lines, contractors' men would have been employed, but when near running lines LNWR men were at work since they were more conversant with railway operations.

Except for the culverting of Valley Brook, there were no unsurmountable problems. However, a report in the *Newcastle Chronicle,* 9th January 1899, dispelled any notion that the work was easy: "About 40 feet of a long bridge running from Crewe Railway Station into the London & North Western Railway Company"s works gave way yesterday afternoon, falling with a great crash on to the main line to Holyhead…" The bridge's foundations had probably been disturbed during tunnel boring. This incident referred to the so-called 'Spider Bridge'.

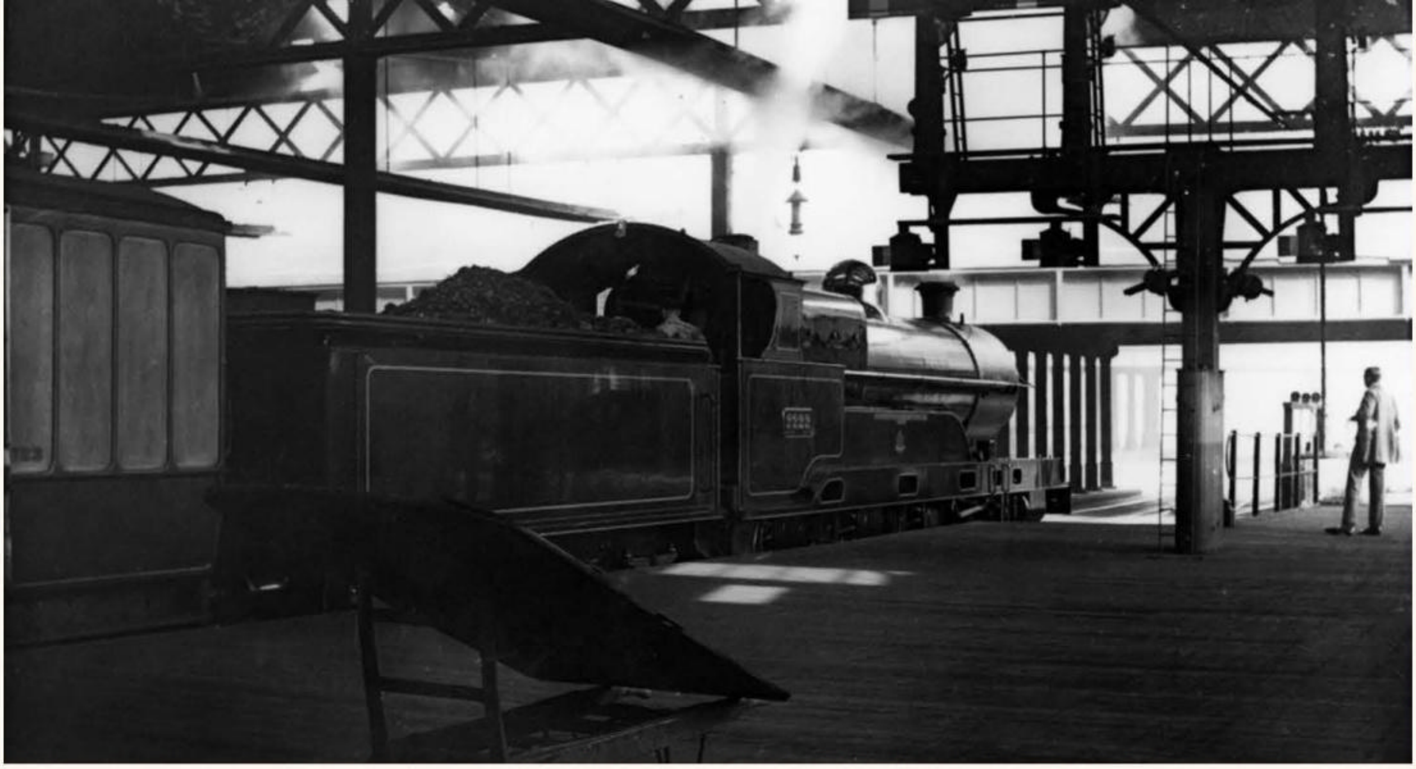
On 5th October 1898 five men were badly injured when engaged in driving into a tunnel heading. A brief report appeared in the *Ludlow Advertiser*, 8th October 1898, under the headline 'FIVE MEN INJURED ON THE RAILWAY'. "On Wednesday, an accident of a serious character occurred on the new extension of the London and North-Western Railway, near Crewe Station. A number of men were driving into a heading or drift for the tunnelling operations along the lines, when a huge baulk of timber used as one of the main struts gave way, the result being that the men tumbled into the tunnel underneath. It was seen that a number of them were shockingly injured. A special engine and van were obtained, and five of the worst cases were taken to the Railway Company's hospital." Two of the tunnels and the goods line to Casey Bridge were inspected by the Board of Trade official, passed and opened for traffic in October 1900. It was reported that the work on the tunnels and independent goods line was fully completed in April 1901.

One and three quarters of a mile south of the passenger station, the company purchased 250 acres of land on which an extensive array of sorting sidings could be laid. When fully functioning, the new sorting sidings replaced smaller goods facilities belonging to the LNWR which lay on the down side just south of the station. Surveying the new railway landscape





The Royal Train on its 1913 visit to Crewe was doubled-headed by 'George V' 4-6-0s Nos.5000 *Coronation* (as polished for the duty) and 2663 *George the Fifth* (at Willesden on 3rd June 1922).
(T. J. Edgington Collection)



The first of the LNWR's 'Claughton' 4-6-0s No.2222 *Sir Gilbert Claughton* was viewed by the Royal party on its visit to Crewe Works. Shortly afterwards the locomotive is seen awaiting departure from Euston. (T. J. Edgington Collection)

near Basford Hall changed completely and was the subject of a report in the *Uttoxeter Advertiser,* 4th July 1900. "The fast and slow lines from Stafford converge at Basford, and near here the excavations were commenced. Considerably over a thousand men… with steam navvies and other modern appliances for moving the soil, have been engaged in the cuttings without cessation, the work, where possible, being carried on night and day."

A close study of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1910 reveals the concentration of railway facilities, new connecting lines, a new engine shed (South Shed), and flyover bridges near to Basford Hall Sidings. The new sidings could accommodate 1,600 wagons on the up side and 1,500 wagons on the down side. According to the *Daily Telegraph,* 6th January 1895, "Goods trains arriving from the South at Casey Bridge… branch off into the new yard, to be sorted and 'marshalled' for despatch to their ultimate destinations." The same newspaper also observed that "The wholesale transfer of the goods sidings to the newly-acquired land, gives space there for a new goods warehouse for sorting the contents of the trucks, and the new engine shed, which has already been erected."

The "newly-acquired land" referred to lay adjacent to Basford Hall. The land was described by I. J. Glover, *op cit,* as "not the best grazing land, liable even today to gather standing water in spring". A Mr. Willett sold the land for railway development, making over £5,000 profit. The farm building at Basford Hall was demolished. (I. J. Glover)

In addition to the goods transit warehouse and the new engine shed, there were newly-erected administration offices and barrack accommodation for locomotive crews and goods guards.

The *Rugby Advertiser,* 4th June 1907, had the following to say on the subject: "On Saturday night, and during the whole of Sunday, hundreds of men were engaged in re-arranging the metals, fixing new sets of rails, and completing the electric signalling apparatus at the south end of the station. The work included the taking down of two large signal boxes, which have been worked mechanically, the laying of hundreds of yards of rails, and the coupling of all the signals at the south junction. The new signal box has 247 levers, and from this box all the signals are controlled for the London, Shrewsbury, and North Stafford lines. An iron gantry attached to the box contains no fewer than forty-two signal arms. The indicators work in communication with the station platforms. By nine o'clock at night, the whole of the work was practically completed, and everything was in perfect readiness to commence the working of the traffic under new conditions."

Station improvements of 1890-1907

By the close of the nineteenth century, Crewe passenger station urgently required enlargement. The reasons were given in a report found in the *Uttoxeter Advertiser,* 4th July 1900, the report appearing under the bold title 'A PROBLEM OF SPACE'.

"Although covering an immense area, with platforms from which eight or ten passenger trains may be loading or discharging passengers at the same time, traffic has nevertheless been frequently impeded for the want of additional space, and further enlargements and extensions became an absolute necessity… On one side Crewe station is practically 'boxed in' by the estate of the Earl of Crewe: on the other side the town of Crewe has been built up quite close to the limits of the station. There is plenty of room north and south; but Crewe station itself is like the neck of a bottle. All the land available for extension on either side has been used up, and still the pressing need was for more room."

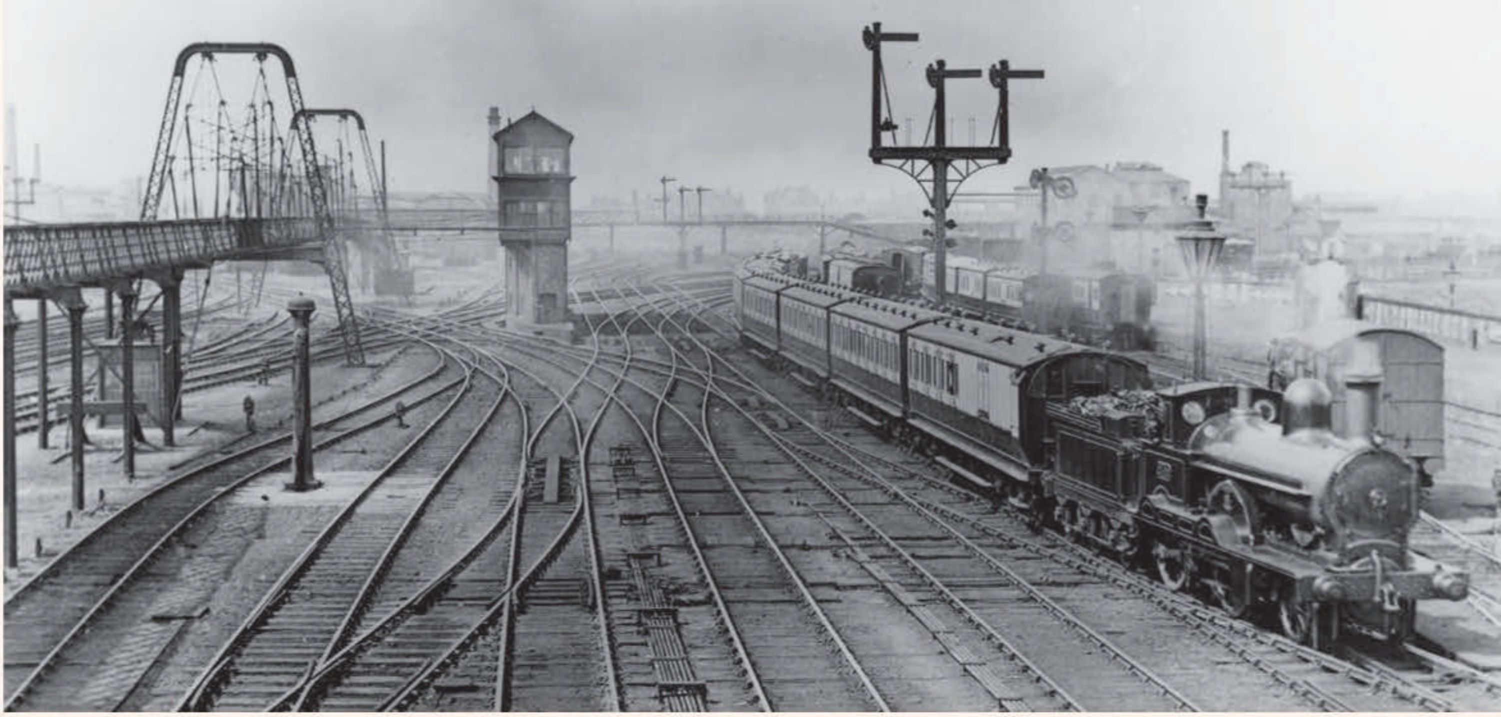
There was certainly a lack of space. On the eastern flank of the station lay Queen's Park, the LNWR's gift to the town in 1887. The Park was sacrosanct and could not be encroached upon. On the western side, lay the town of Crewe. The OS map of 1876 shows the amount of LNWR infrastructure that occupied space to the north of Nantwich Road. The passenger station extended under and beyond Nantwich Road Bridge. A goods shed stood close to the down line just beyond the fullest extent of the station. Two engine sheds also occupied spaces close to the branch line to Chester and Holyhead. To add to the congested site, Crewe Gas Works took advantage of a site near the railway for a siding connection. Wedged between the branch line to Manchester and the main line to the north lay the Paint Shop and the Carriage Repair Shop, these three being part of the LNWR"s Works. The Works proper occupied much of the area alongside the main down line to the north.

In preparation for large-scale changes to be made at the passenger station, a portion of the Old Works was relocated. *The Blackburn Standard*, 22nd August 1891, had the story: "It has just transpired at Crewe that it is the intention of the London and North Western Railway Company to remove the Old Works and re-erect them in the neighbourhood of the Steel Works at the west end of the town… The measure has been forced upon the attention of the directors of the company by the congested condition of traffic at Crewe railway station… The site of the old works will be utilised for the enlargement of siding accommodation…"

By the summer of July 1904, the enlargement of the passenger station was being pressed forward. The local press gave reports of progress with the work; the report of the not-so-local *Staffordshire Advertiser,* 4th July, represented one of the best.

"When the new portion of the station is completed the accommodation will be largely increased, for another island platform will be added, with the same number of lines as the present Down one, and a through Down Fast line on the west side as well; or, in other words, nine or ten through lines and three or four 'scissors' crossings. Altogether there will be ten bay lines, as against six at present. The new platform will be 500 yards long, and the area of roofing of the station will be nearly eight acres.

"There will be, as now, footbridges for passengers and subways for luggage, the latter to be served by electric lifts. Already



A Manchester to Birmingham express curves round the approach to Crewe behind a 2-2-2-0 compound, passing the Crewe North signal box and the Spider Bridge. The 1887 North Junction signal box was replaced in 1906 by a new all-electric box. (See p198).
(T. J. Edgington Collection)

the work has so far progressed that some lengths of the platform retaining wall are built at the south end of the new station. The bridge over Nantwich-road over the station is being reconstructed and extended on the west side of the existing one."

We move on to 1906 and consult the 23rd June issue of the *Liverpool Echo* in that year. A useful summary of the new station is worth repeating: "A fine new platform that has been built at the station will be used for the first time tomorrow, when the Irish Mail will pass alongside it. This will add greatly to the capacity of the station and will relieve the congestion of traffic which has been felt for a long time past.

"The platform will be used mainly for the Down trains from London. It is a quarter of a mile long, and is equipped in the most modern manner, being lighted with the electric light from the company's own generating station. A subway has been constructed, connecting with the platform, and this will be used for the conveyance of luggage.

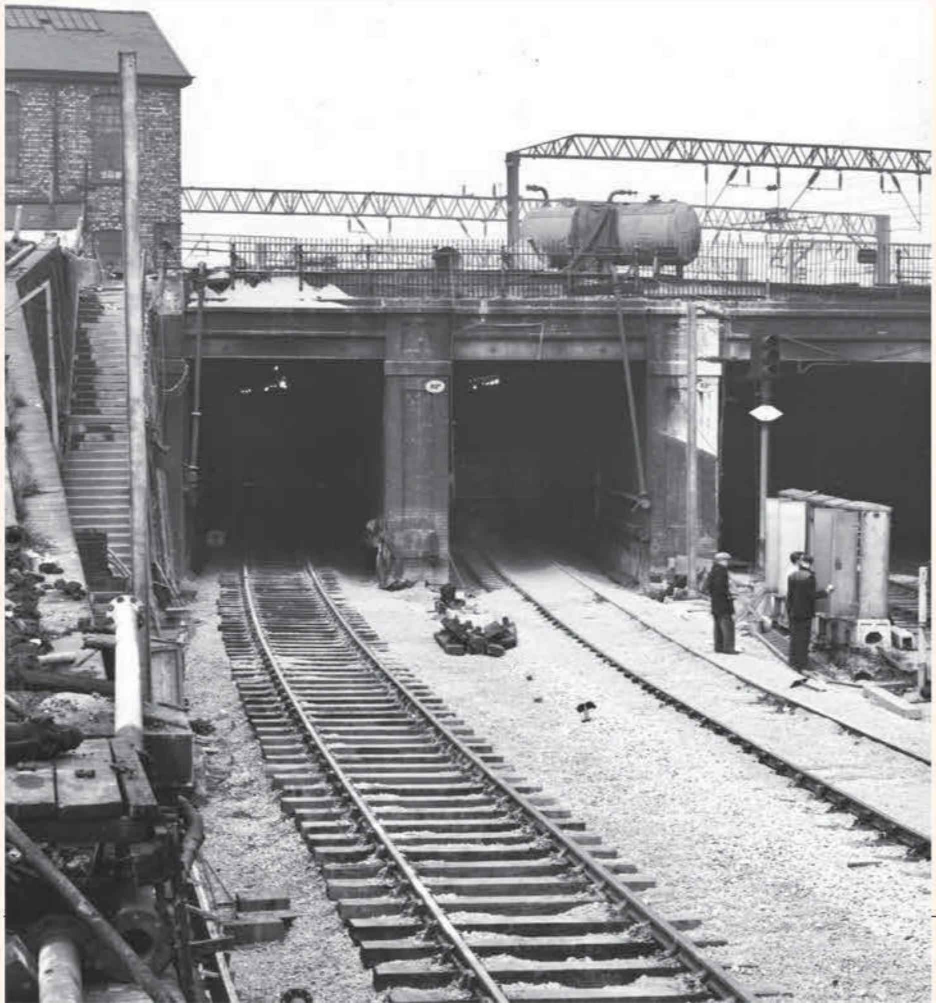
"Other alterations are in progress. The middle island platform will be raised and lengthened to correspond with the new platform, new signal boxes will be erected, and a new entrance built. A passenger bridge is being provided across the station, and everything is being done to bring Crewe abreast of its work as a railway centre..

I. J. Glover notes that on the new Platforms 1 and 2 "a full suite of offices was provided and these included Waiting Rooms and separate Refreshment Rooms, one being specially set aside for First Class passengers. A Booking Office and Telegraph were incorporated and two newspaper stalls provided".

Another major feature of the remodelled station was the GPO Sorting Office. This function merits attention in its own right and the reader is directed to I. J. Glover's description found in *Milepost 158 – The Story of Crewe and Its Railways,* a LNWR Society journal.

The Railway Engineer, September 1901 edition, found space to summarise one of the most comprehensive projects the LNWR had dealt with. The passage was taken from the 'Building News', an abridged copy of which follws: "Now at the end of some five years' work, which has given employment to thousands of men, the difficulty has been solved, and with the help of 95 miles of roads above and below ground now constructed, goods trains can now be passed through Crewe with the utmost celerity. There are three tunnels, which had to be driven through stiff clay, and in many places there was only 5ft between the roof and the surface, over which the traffic was being continuously carried, and with which no interference could be allowed."

The Southern Aspect of the Independent Line tunnels. This interesting photograph was taken in 1958/59. Although signs of electrification are present above the tunnels, there are no signs yet that the Independent Line are to be similarly treated. The cut-and-cover tunnels are designated, left to right, Down Liverpool Line; this is followed by the Down Liverpool (the three men have their backs to it) and, far right, the double track Up and Down Manchester Lines. Far to left are the steps leading to the engine shed stores. An LNWR Minute, dated 17th April 1901, stated that the down line to Manchester was brought into use on 20th March 1901.
(Photograph courtesy of Eddie Johnson)



The Royal Visit of 1913

The Royal visit to Crewe took place on 21st April 1913. King George V and Queen Mary formed the Royal party which travelled by train from Euston station, departing at 11.35 am and arriving at Crewe at the scheduled time of 2.30pm. The entourage included Sir Gilbert Claughton (Chairman of the LNWR), C. N. Lawrence (Deputy Chairman), Sir Frank Ree (General Manager) and R. Turnbull (Superintendent of the Line).

The Royal Train was drawn appropriately by 'George' V Class 4-4-0s No.2663 *George V* and No.5000 *Coronation,* double-heading. It was usual to send a pilot engine over the route to be taken by a royal train, in order to ensure the safety of such esteemed passengers. This task was undertaken by 'Renewed Precedent' Class 2-4-0 No.1213 *Queen*. On arrival at Crewe, the King and Queen alighted on Platform 1, "which has been made into a place of much splendour" and where the ceremonies of receiving addresses of welcome from the Cheshire County Council and the Crewe Town Council were given.

So popular was the occasion perceived to be that "reserved accommodation was set apart for the members of these authorities, together with their wives and the officials, under a huge canopy, draped in royal purple and gold. Huge cork baskets, standing close upon six feet high, filled with crimson roses and flowering plants of brilliant varied hues, relieved with palms, delicate green foliage and evergreens, were placed in the forefront of the carpeted enclosure". There was a profusion of flags and banners suspended from the roof girders, "which were tastefully draped with festoons of evergreens, and trimmed with garlands of greenery".

On the arrival of the Royal Train, a band struck up the National Anthem; the King and Queen stepped from the saloon, and on Platform 1 short speeches were made. Afterwards, "the Royal train moved on to the works [the main purpose for the visit] at 2.45pm and its approach to the West End Fitting Shop was signalled by loud outbursts of cheering on the part of hundreds of workmen lined up along the route".

The train came to a standstill alongside a "prettily draped platform", which had been erected near the entrance to the workshop. "Close by the workshop entrance, a stand had been erected for the accommodation of the children of the Webb Orphanage, whose fathers died whilst in service of the company."

The tour of the works took place without delay, C. J. B. Cooke acting as guide. Once inside the building, the King and Queen were drawn to a full-size model of Stephenson's *Rocket,* Queen Adelaide's coac, and a new locomotive named *Sir Gilbert Claughton.* In the Fitting Shop were connecting and coupling rods, cylinders and valve motions. The Fitting Shop was well supplied with electrically-driven machines, "all specially adapted for the work they have to do, such as frame slotting, drilling, grinding and so on. Two four-ton electric cranes run overhead for quickly handling material and passing it from one part of the shop to another".

Other shops on the itinerary included the Erecting Shop, the Flanging Shop, the Points and Crossing Shop, the Boiler Shop, the Nut and Bolt shop, the Tyre Shop and the Wheel Shop. It was in the Nut and Bolt Shop that King noticed a medal attached to the coat of a man who was operating a planing machine. The King paused and asked the man the significance of the decoration. He was informed that the man had served with the Crewe Engineers in the South African War.

Epilogue

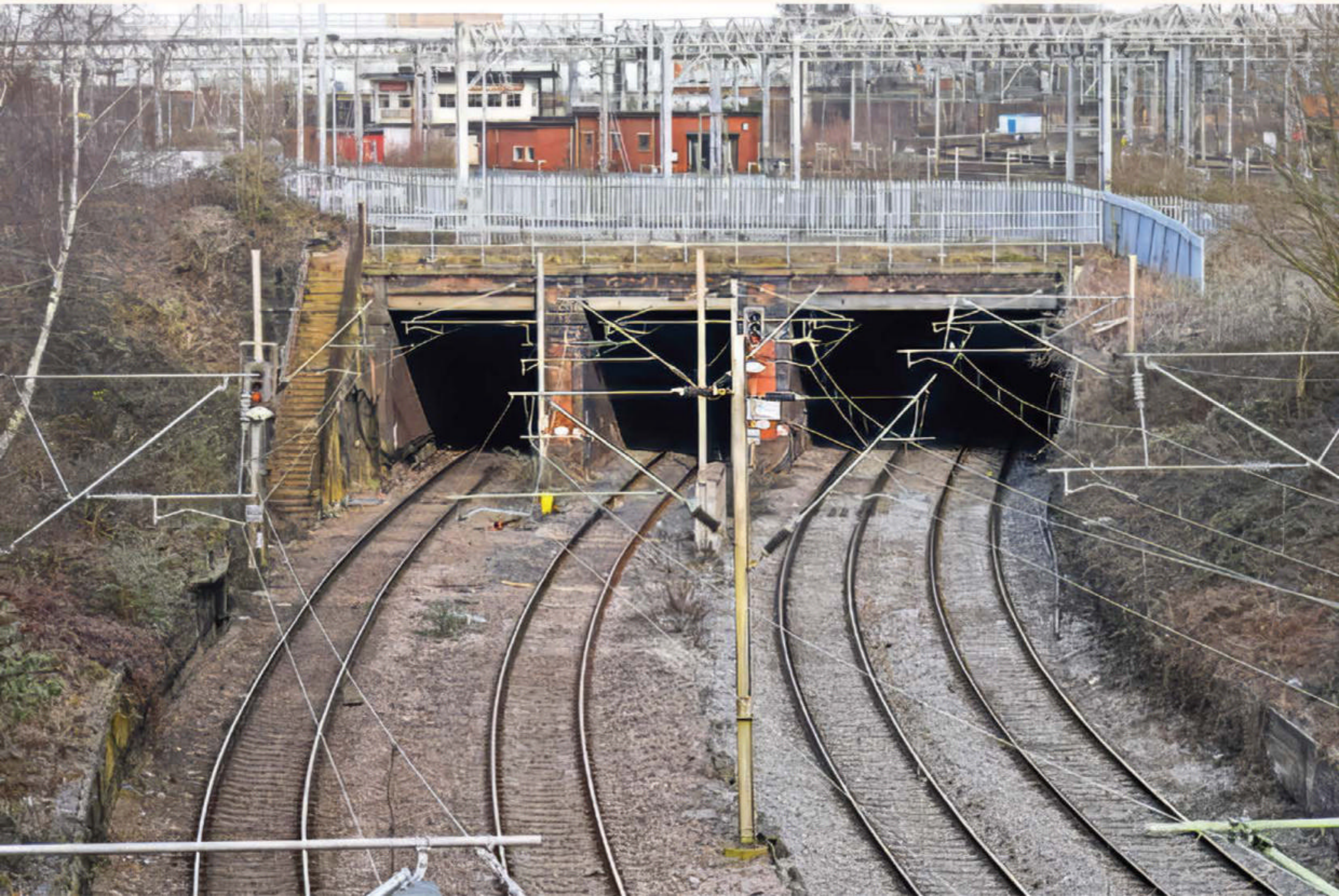
In 1985 a father and his young son visited Crewe station. The father found the newly remodelled station fascinating, although it is admitted that he knew very little of the station"s development. It was deemed fascinating: from the complexity of the track work, the signalling, the frequency of traffic stopping at the platforms, or passing via the fast through lines, to the hustle and bustle of people, the ceaseless activity and the sense of anticipation.

The hope was that the young son would be infected by the father's enthusiasm for what is regarded as the hub of a great system – the British railways. It is to the son that this modest account of five aspects of Crewe station is dedicated.

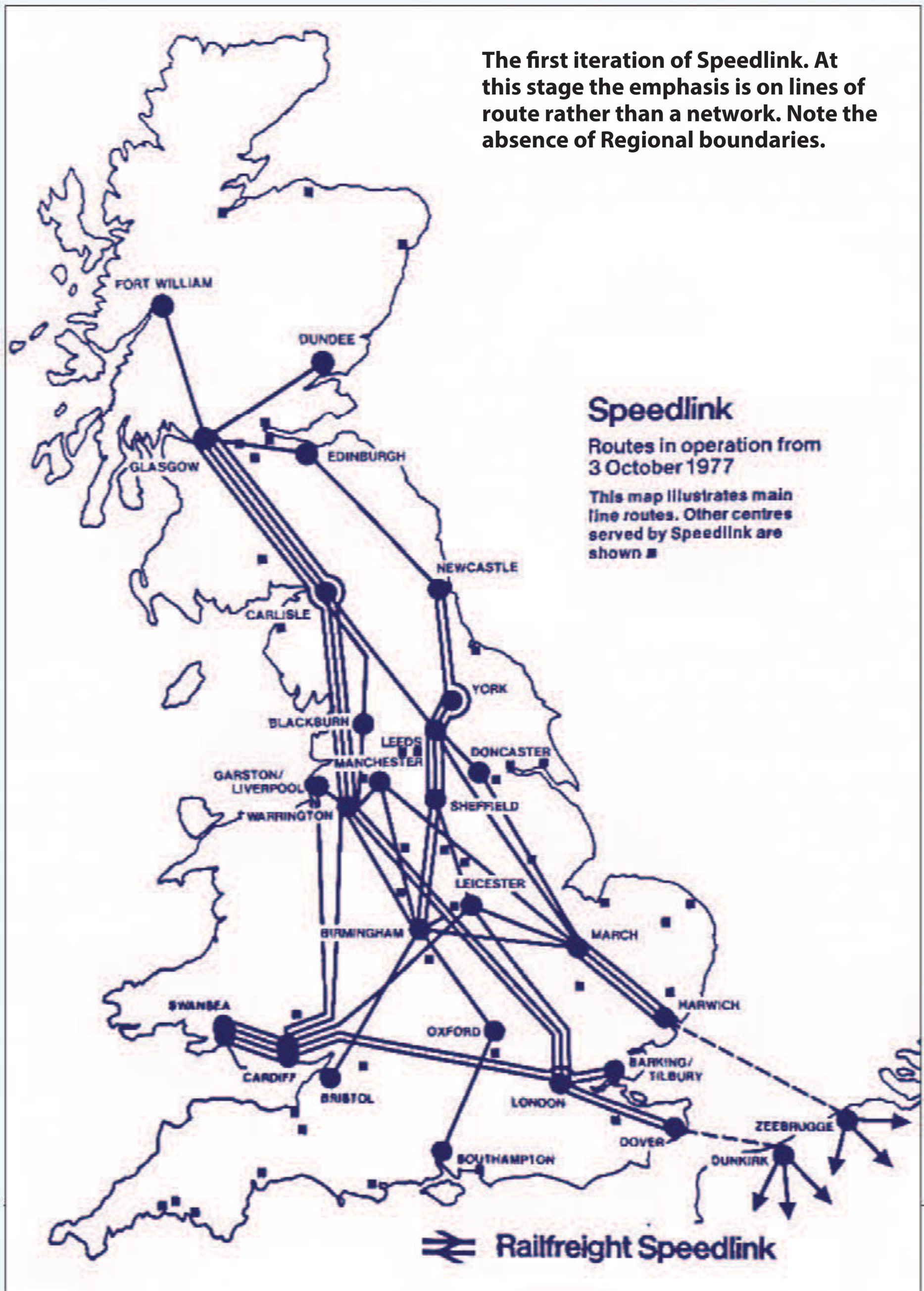
Acknowledgements

Gratitude is extended to David Patrick and to David Pennington, of the London and North Western Railway Society, for their help in writing this article. Thanks are also due to Eddie Johnson for his much appreciated contribution to the project.

The portals of the Independent Line tunnels have been captured on film in this excellent photograph. The fact that these cut-and-cover 'tunnels' were constructed a few feet below the running lines comprising Crewe North Junction, without hindrance to traffic, is testament to the civil engineering prowess of the early 1900s. (Author's Collection)



On 14th September 1977, the day after the official launch of the Speedlink brand, AC electric locomotive No.81 018 heads northbound on the WCML at Tring with a train of Continental ferry vans (the blue-liveried ones owned by Transfesa used for fruit and vegetable traffic from Spain). The train is thought to be 6S73 11.00 Dover–Dundee, a trunk service on Route 5 of the new network. (John Dedman)



The first iteration of Speedlink. At this stage the emphasis is on lines of route rather than a network. Note the absence of Regional boundaries.

Speedlink
Routes in operation from 3 October 1977
This map illustrates main line routes. Other centres served by Speedlink are shown ■
FORT WILLIAM
DUNDEE
GLASGOW
EDINBURGH
NEWCASTLE
CARLISLE
YORK
BLACKBURN
LEEDS
MANCHESTER
DONCASTER
GARSTON/ LIVERPOOL
WARRINGTON
SHEFFIELD
LEICESTER
BIRMINGHAM
MARCH
HARWICH
SWANSEA
OXFORD
CARDIFF
BRISTOL
BARKING/ TILBURY
LONDON
ZEEBRUGGE
DOVER
SOUTHAMPTON
DUNKIRK
Railfreight Speedlink

SPEEDLIN OF A RAILF

BY M. G. SADLER

The launch and a sinking

On 13th September 1977 Peter Parker, Chairman of the British Railways Board, stood alongside a conference train in Marylebone station. It was stabled there at the start of a three-month tour of the industrial centres of the UK and had been designed to promote a new-look freight service under the brand name of Speedlink supported by the slogan "Speedlink: the freight name for reliability".

In typically optimistic terms Mr. Parker expressed the belief that Speedlink would become an established household name in much the same way as Inter City had. He looked forward to his salesmen getting their order books into new traffic which would be attracted to rail. He also claimed that even at this early stage Speedlink in its previously emerging form of a modern, fast air-braked freight wagonload network had already been successful. Carryings had grown to two million tonnes a year, of which more than a quarter had been entirely new traffic and was also profitable. It covered all its costs and was making a contribution to the overall freight balance sheet. He boasted that most importantly the new service was satisfying customers.

Thirteen years later in October 1990 at a BRB Chairman's Group meeting, senior managers were confronted by the brutal conclusions of a consultancy report which had recommended the abandonment of the Speedlink wagonload network and advised that operations should cease at the earliest practicable opportunity. In the event the Board waited for the Managing Director of Railfreight Distribution to produce an internal memorandum outlining the dire situation in which this part of the railway now found itself before making a decision.

On 6th July 1984 No.37 012 *Loch Rannoch* departs south from York Dringhouses yard with a Speedlink service. There were eighteen trunk trains booked to work here (one starter, three terminators and fourteen through trains calling to attach or detach). The white painted roofs of air-braked vans used to convey Rowntree's confectionery products are in evidence in the middle distance. The fortunes of this location were struck a hammer blow in January 1987 with the announcement of the loss of this major traffic flow. It had been of substantial value to Speedlink but the customer decided not to renew its factory's internal rail network, opting instead to build up its fleet of 38-tonne lorries. Dringhouses was closed later that year as a result.
(Dave Chambers/Paul Robertson Collection)

K THE RISE AND FALL REIGHT BRAND

PART ONE

He stated that the Speedlink network would generate a direct cash operating loss of £29 million on a turnover of £42 million that financial year and this would increase by a further £8 million in the next financial year as a result of essential locomotive maintenance previously deferred. Damningly he had concluded that the product was no longer relevant in today's marketplace. A public announcement followed on 12th December indicating that to minimise legal and contractual obligations with customers, withdrawal of services would be delayed until 8th July 1991.

How had it come to this? This article will attempt to answer the question by initially setting out what Speedlink was set up to do and detailing the plans for its development. There will be a review of how well it was managed and performed on a day-to-day basis in its early years. It will also look at the challenges it subsequently faced from road competition, struggled to introduce more productive ways of operating and how it dealt with external economic and political factors.

Dark clouds and blue skies

In the early 1970s freight traffic was in decline with a marked shift from wagonload to trainload operation. Performance was slipping because of ageing equipment and under-investment. There was a high rate of locomotive failures. Quality of service was also impacted adversely by difficulty in recruiting guards and numerous labour disputes. The wagonload business was on its knees; inefficient, slow, unreliable and haemorrhaging traffic to road. However, at Board level there was a belief that the medium-sized (lorry load) door-to-door sector of the freight market was an area of potentially significant growth which they should go after. At the same time, they were forecasting that traditional wagonload services would only secure a small and decreasing share of this traffic because revenues, levels of which were fixed by road competition, would be insufficient to offset the full costs of a road/rail/road operation.

Step forward the Research and Development (R&D) team at Derby which was given the challenge of finding ways for rail to gain an improving share of the national freight market through technical innovation. They started work in February 1974 and spent twelve months analysing market requirements (much to the frustration of senior commercial managers). In August 1975 it submitted an initial proposal for a system designed to "enable BR to match the road hauliers' flexibility and efficiency" through intensive use of capital equipment and a small workforce. It was a variation on the Freightliner concept with general merchandise traffic moved in containers but loaded on fixed formation powered trains to be known as Freight Multiple Units with a top speed of 90mph. The key innovation element was centred on the unloading/loading operation. Trains were to arrive and depart on a canted track between platforms inclined at the same angle. Ingeniously containers were to be moved from unit to platform and vice versa by gravity using built-in rollers. Forklift trucks were then required to load and unload road vehicles. The operating network was to be built around twenty major depots designed to sort containers automatically with each supported by fifteen to twenty minor depots. The network was given the working title Speedlink.

The proposal found few friends at the highest level and there was a reluctance to share it with the Board until a fully costed and commercially sound plan had been developed. Senior managers, focused on the pressing current issues of reducing costs and disengagement from wagonload traffic, initially dismissed it as a blue skies study. The Executive Director Freight set up a validation exercise to challenge the assumptions on which the R&D thinking had been based. It concluded that:

- the Research team had overestimated the revenue achievable with their Speedlink option.
- significantly underestimated the costs of setting up and operating the network system.
- even if all capital charges were written off Speedlink would still not be competitive.

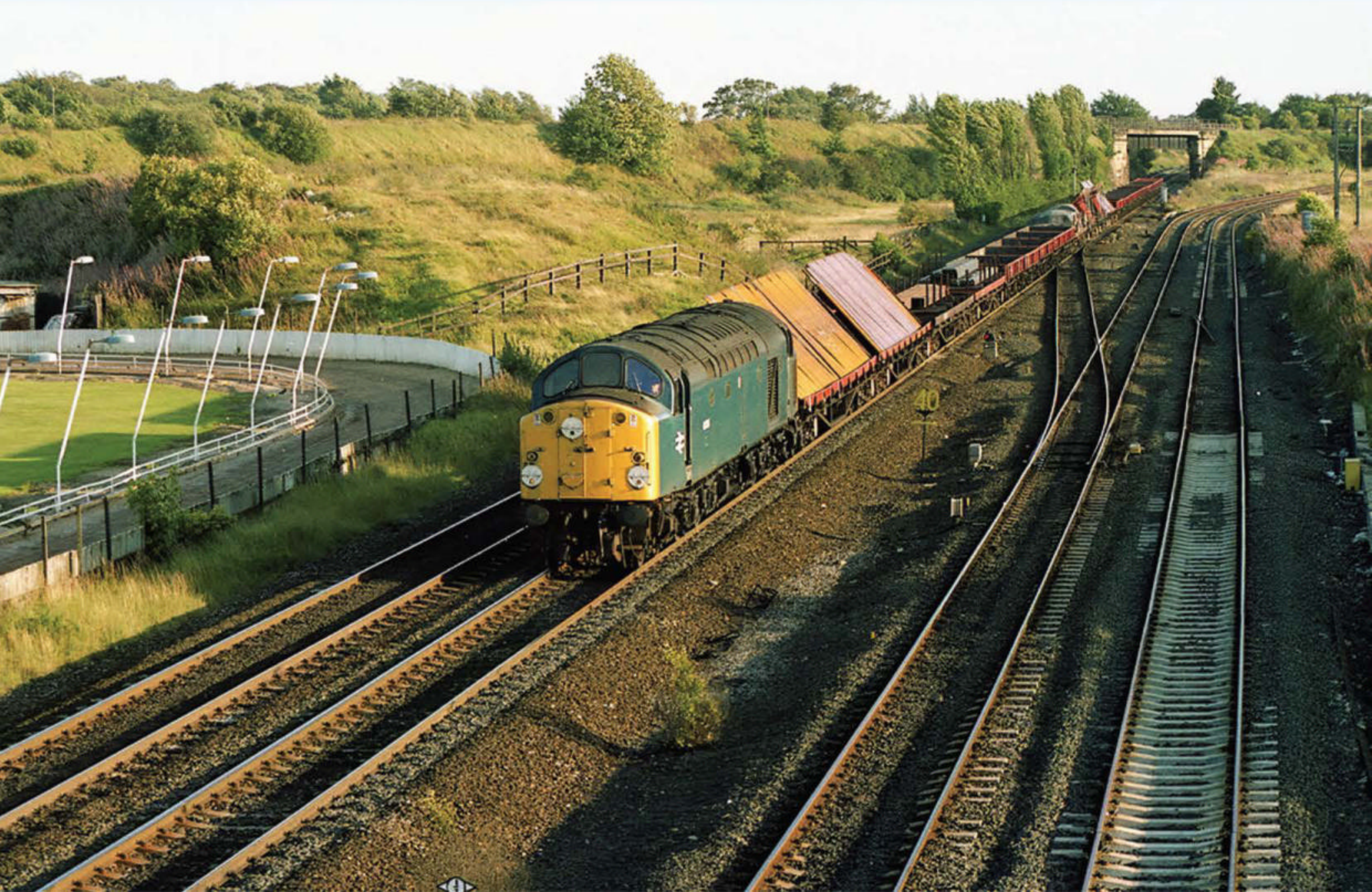
This damning financial summary claimed that to capture an annual potential 50 million tonnes of business by 1990 there would need to be an initial capital outlay of roughly £2 billion and thereafter annual revenue generated would be £263 million but direct costs of £614 million per annum would arise. By September the following year the decision had been taken to stop further work on developing the project because the generalised system approach it had taken to moving small-scale merchandise traffic was seen as unsustainable in the longer term.

Cheaper by road

If the Board thought that it had managed to quietly kick the R&D work into the long grass, it was soon disabused of the idea when the Speedlink Report was leaked to the railway press. (It was suspected at the time a civil servant in the Department of Transport may have been responsible). *The Railway Gazette* published an article accusing BR managers of presenting "grotesquely exaggerated" financial calculations seemingly presenting a train cost profile which effectively made the case that it would be cheaper to send all door-to-door traffic by road. The article also bemoaned the lack of entrepreneurial drive shown by BR freight managers. It highlighted the apparent lack of effort in making better use of assets and building on the achievements of the Freightliner and express wagonload network. In a courtesy letter to Peter Parker the Editor suggested that with a Transport Secretary currently being harassed by the Treasury it might be an attractive proposition for the Government to "close the lot" when it came to consider freight by rail.

Getting on with the day job

Meanwhile, under somewhat less public scrutiny, a Wagonload Planning Manager (WPM) was appointed at BR HQ in 1976. The post brought a clearer organisational approach to implementing a corporate strategy for both disengaging from wagonload traffic and identifying more profitable activity. This change was helping to bring a new impetus to the management of what up to this point had been a large, dispersed business crossing Regional boundaries where responsibility was fragmented and historically prone to a degree of operational inertia. Examples of the WPM at work included the coordination of approaches to customers who needed to be persuaded to move their traffic in private owner wagons to take advantage of new air-braked trains, leading the task of identifying worthwhile opportunities for reinvestment in wagonload services and developing a system of space reservation to make sure room was always available on trains for regular flows and that any spare capacity was fully exploited. There were further encouraging signs in the mid-1970s that BR was getting to grips with its wagonload problem. The full cutover of the computer based Total Operations Processing System (TOPS) in October 1975 accelerated the process of rationalising the wagon fleet, identifying lightly loaded services for withdrawal and stripping out excess marshalling yard capacity. The focus was now on developing a specialised approach to penetrating the market through Freightliners for door-to-door traffic and an air-braked network for siding-to-siding movement.

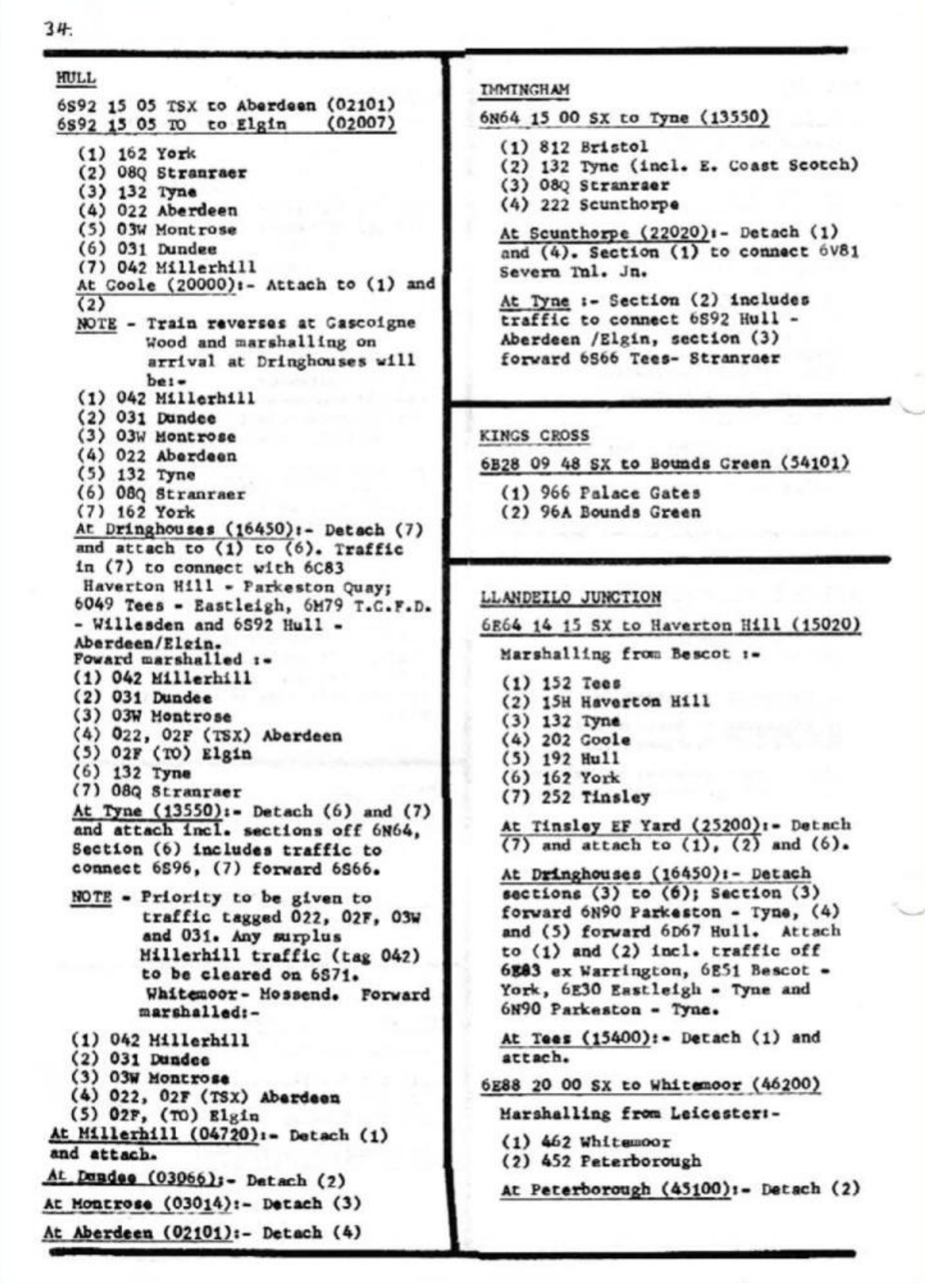


At Ouston Junction No.40 004 approaches the south end of Tyne Yard on 2nd September 1982 hauling 6S63 14.50 Scunthorpe–Aberdeen with a train consisting of steel-carrying wagons, prominent among which are two XVAs marshalled next to the locomotive. These were members of a pool of 50 re-bogied trestle wagons modified at Shildon in 1979 and equipped with air brakes. They were designed with a framework which supported plates at a 48-degree angle thereby enabling the carriage of traffic wider than the 8ft permitted with the standard loading gauge. The lines to the right in the picture are those of the route to Annfield Plain. It had latterly played host to block trains of iron ore from Tyne Dock to the steelworks at Consett. It had closed exactly two years before this photograph was taken so the sound of pairs of Class 37s thundering up the demanding gradients had been lost to history. However, to this day on Sunday evenings greyhounds still race around the track of Pelaw Grange Stadium seen to the left. (Dave Jolly)

Reshaping the Wagonload Network

An internal Freight Sector Study started in 1976 confirmed that the wagonload network would never support reinvestment. It gloomily predicted that by the end of 1978 it would fail to cover its direct expenses by £30 million. It also confirmed that because bulk commodity customers offered traffic in an interdependent and complementary way for both trainload movement and existing wagonload services, there would be a risk of losing significant volumes of trainload business if there was no service for wagonloads. It was therefore necessary to develop a new pattern of wagonload services of improved quality catering selectively for middle to long-distance traffic provided primarily for the less than trainload business of major customers. This was the starting point for Speedlink in September 1977 which began with 29 balanced services each day. At the launch ceremony the accompanying press briefing declared that the brand name

The Eastern Region Marshalling of Freight Trains Book dated 17th May 1982 set out marshalling instructions for Speedlink services. This extract gives a flavour of the increasing complexity of operation with multi-portioned trains requiring potentially time-consuming attaching and detaching movements, and mandated connections to be made with other services. Evidence that the original principle of exchange between trains being the exception was already being diluted. (Simon Barnes)



34.

HULL

6S92 15 05 TSX to Aberdeen (02101)
6S92 15 05 TO to Elgin (02007)

(1) 162 York
(2) 08Q Stranraer
(3) 132 Tyne
(4) 022 Aberdeen
(5) 03W Montrose
(6) 031 Dundee
(7) 042 Millerhill
At Goole (20000):- Attach to (1) and (2)
NOTE - Train reverses at Gascoigne Wood and marshalling on arrival at Dringhouses will be:-
(1) 042 Millerhill
(2) 031 Dundee
(3) 03W Montrose
(4) 022 Aberdeen
(5) 132 Tyne
(6) 08Q Stranraer
(7) 162 York
At Dringhouses (16450):- Detach (7) and attach to (1) to (6). Traffic in (7) to connect with 6C83 Haverton Hill - Parkeston Quay; 6049 Tees - Eastleigh, 6M79 T.C.F.D. - Willesden and 6S92 Hull - Aberdeen/Elgin.
Foward marshalled :-
(1) 042 Millerhill
(2) 031 Dundee
(3) 03W Montrose
(4) 022, 02F (TSX) Aberdeen
(5) 02F (TO) Elgin
(6) 132 Tyne
(7) 08Q Stranraer
At Tyne (13550):- Detach (6) and (7) and attach incl. sections off 6N64, Section (6) includes traffic to connect 6S96, (7) forward 6S66.

NOTE - Priority to be given to traffic tagged 022, 02F, 03W and 031. Any surplus Millerhill traffic (tag 042) to be cleared on 6S71. Whitemoor- Mossend. Forward marshalled:-

(1) 042 Millerhill
(2) 031 Dundee
(3) 03W Montrose
(4) 022, 02F (TSX) Aberdeen
(5) 02F, (TO) Elgin
At Millerhill (04720):- Detach (1) and attach.

At Dundee (03066):- Detach (2)

At Montrose (03014):- Detach (3)

At Aberdeen (02101):- Detach (4)

IMMINGHAM

6N64 15 00 SX to Tyne (13550)

(1) 812 Bristol
(2) 132 Tyne (incl. E. Coast Scotch)
(3) 08Q Stranraer
(4) 222 Scunthorpe

At Scunthorpe (22020):- Detach (1) and (4). Section (1) to connect 6V81 Severn Tnl. Jn.

At Tyne :- Section (2) includes traffic to connect 6S92 Hull - Aberdeen /Elgin, section (3) forward 6S66 Tees- Stranraer

KINGS CROSS

6B28 09 48 SX to Bounds Green (54101)

(1) 966 Palace Gates
(2) 96A Bounds Green

LLANDEILO JUNCTION

6E64 14 15 SX to Haverton Hill (15020)

Marshalling from Bescot :-

(1) 152 Tees
(2) 15H Haverton Hill
(3) 132 Tyne
(4) 202 Goole
(5) 192 Hull
(6) 162 York
(7) 252 Tinsley

At Tinsley EF Yard (25200):- Detach (7) and attach to (1), (2) and (6).

At Dringhouses (16450):- Detach sections (3) to (6); Section (3) forward 6N90 Parkeston - Tyne, (4) and (5) forward 6D67 Hull. Attach to (1) and (2) incl. traffic off 6E83 ex Warrington, 6E51 Bescot - York, 6E30 Eastleigh - Tyne and 6N90 Parkeston - Tyne.

At Tees (15400):- Detach (1) and attach.

6E88 20 00 SX to Whitemoor (46200)

Marshalling from Leicester:-

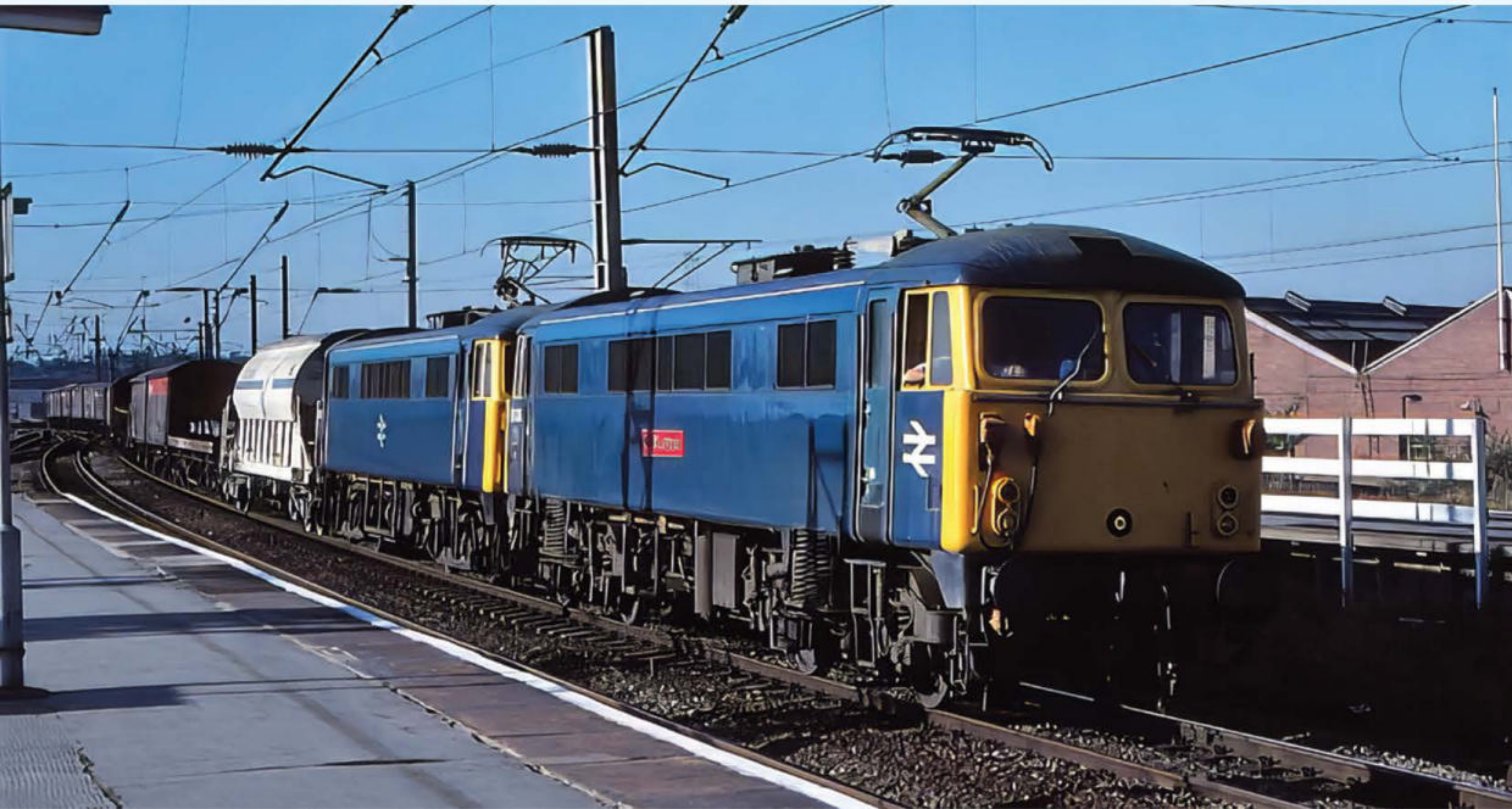
(1) 462 Whitemoor
(2) 452 Peterborough

At Peterborough (45100):- Detach (2)

had come from staff suggestions in a *Rail News* competition and was being used in public for the first time. It also claimed somewhat insouciantly that in its previous life the name had only been quoted privately within the industry. By the end of 1978 the number of out and back workings had increased to 35 daily services conveying 2.3 million tonnes of traffic annually of which 25% was new to rail.

Planning for the future

The first attempt to build on the output of previous desk exercises which had



Passing through Warrington Bank Quay on 24th July 1984, Nos.87 008 *City of Liverpool* and 86 039 have just departed from Arpley Yard with the 6S97 Severn Tunnel Junction–Mossend trunk service. The locomotives are working in multiple to provide the tractive effort required to lift their load of 33 wagons over Shap and Beattock Summits. At this time, Arpley and Walton Yards between them handled the largest number of trunk haul Speedlink services on the network. The local trip network based on these yards also covered a wide geographical area including the North Wales Coast, Cheshire, the Wirral, Merseyside, Lancashire, the Cumbrian Coast, Carlisle and Greater Manchester area. (Michael Hart) produced the new wagonload concept was the submission of the 1979 Speedlink Development Plan. It reiterated the primary focus on safeguarding all worthwhile longer-distance wagonloads from major trainload customers in order that their operations could be supported and further developed. A secondary objective was included "to attract from road other worthwhile traffic in wagonload size which can conveniently be dealt with through private sidings or freight depots". In both cases the aim was to translate existing activity into a new service competitive in price and quality, and capable of funding essential reinvestment.

It was clearly stated at the outset that the first goal to be achieved was to improve the quality of service. There was a recognition that if customer confidence was to be restored and resource productivity capable of supporting reinvestment was to be achieved, then selecting the right sort of traffic and geographical areas to be served was key. Accordingly, the policy for traffic acceptance was to be one of tight control in four respects:

- each traffic flow had to be served by a direct train. Intermediate exchange between services en route was to very much be the exception.
- each route operated had to generate at least 100,000 tonnes pa in each direction.
- the market price for a commodity must cover all costs. This potentially ruled out low value and seasonal traffic and flows burdened with high costs associated with handling and cartage.
- terminals in "greenfield" areas were to be avoided and tripping services were only to be justified if their resource costs were sustainable.

On this basis it was planned to move 6.4 million tonnes annually on Speedlink services by 1982 of which about 6 million was existing wagonload traffic. This effectively meant that BR would not be providing for 23 million tonnes of other traffic it was currently moving (5 million tonnes of steel products, 11 million tonnes of industrial and domestic coal and 7 million tonnes of various other business). The Plan was notably cautious about the amount of new traffic which could be won from road. A modest target of a further 0.5 million tonnes by 1982 represented less than half the rate of capture which had been secured since the inception of Speedlink. Perhaps this less than bullish outlook was justified based on the sobering results of a market research survey of road hauliers in south east England which landed on freight managers' desks in November 1978. Forty-six firms had been interviewed to establish the likelihood of them switching their traffic flows to rail using new air-braked wagons. Only three were interested enough to continue discussions further. Notably the Report found that Speedlink was only competitive with road rates for traffic between southern England and Scotland.

A total of eleven routes was identified over which less than trainload traffic was planned to be moved for major customers. They are shown in Table 1 *(Above)*..

The assessment of the financial prospects for the brand was made in a similarly cautious vein. The Plan estimated that on full cutover in 1982 the direct expenses of the Speedlink system would be £29 million. Given that it was predicted that it would be attracting £40 million worth of gross receipts by this time there would be a contribution of £11 million.

Table 1: SPEEDLINK 1982–Analysis by route and service

	Volume (000's tonnes)		Daily out/home services
	Out	Home	
1. South Wales–Willesden	359	137	6
2. South Wales–Doncaster	162	385	6
3 .South Wales–Tees/Tyne	480	523	12
4. South Wales–NW & Glasgow	348	324	10
5. Willesden–NW & Glasgow	481	588	8
6. Parkeston Quay–NE & Glasgow	335	268	8
7. Doncaster–Warrington	85	110	4
8. Willesden–Tees/Tyne	407	326	12
9. Warrington–Tees/Tyne	166	159	4
10. South Wales–Parkeston Quay	98	121	4
11. Warrington–Parkeston Quay	226	282	6
Total	**6.4 million tonnes**	**80**	

The Development Plan was endorsed at a Railway Executive meeting on 12th February 1979 and the view expressed that there appeared to be little risk attached to it given the conservative approach to assessing volumes and receipts against the background of a continuing UK recession. The support given cemented the position that Speedlink was now regarded as the framework upon which reinvestment in freight activity would be built.

Route Management

The 1979 Development Plan was not intended to go into the detail of the various management actions required to ensure it was delivered effectively. However, it touched very briefly on the operational complexity of the product to be developed and referred to a 'Route Management' scheme which would address the issues of managerial responsibility and performance measurement.

The Board knew that there had been several reasons for the poor performance of its wagonload business in past years and one of the main ones had been a lack of effective management. Financial responsibility had been diffused and lacked definition. Revenue and cost objectives had been pursued independently and not related in a meaningful way. It also recognised that if Speedlink was to make a worthwhile contribution it had to be positively and convincingly run.

The principle of a Regionally-based route management system to monitor trunk trains had been established quickly soon after Speedlink's launch but hammering out the detail of the required organisational relationships and personal responsibilities proved to be a protracted process. It was not until February 1979 that agreement was reached to conduct a pilot exercise covering four routes to prove the feasibility of the concept. The results of this trial provided both encouragement and pause for thought. It was reported that no significant problems had been encountered with the tasks of monitoring physical performance and determining revenue but that getting a grip on costs had proved more elusive. Worryingly it had become apparent during the trial that the level of actual performance fell well short of that called for in the Development Plan. Wagon utilisation in particular was so poor that it had caused loss of revenue. Consequently, it was resolved to widen the scope of evaluation and follow up action to include the punctuality of feeder services and wagon turn-round times.

The proposed arrangements for the route management system were put to the Board's Railway Executive Group (REG) for endorsement in April 1980. They appeared eminently logical in terms of the management organisational structure in place at the time but also lacked clarity when it came to the question of who would take decisive and timely action if needed. The Chief Freight Manager at BR HQ would be responsible for setting financial targets for each route and authorising investment decisions. The Chief Operations Manager at HQ was to retain responsibility for train planning. Each route was to be allocated to a lead Route Manager who would be responsible for monitoring performance of traffic capture, train loading, wagon utilisation and financial results across all Regional boundaries involved. This post reported to their respective Regional Chief Freight Manager (CFM). Four were to be based in the Western Region, three in the Eastern, three in the London Midland and one in the Scottish. The responsibility for the delivery of operating performance on a day-to-day basis within each Region remained with the Regional Chief Operating Manager with Divisional and Area Managers reporting to him. The complexity of the working relationships associated with making the scheme work were illustrated in the terminology used. Targets were to be "agreed in consultation with". Managers in different functions were required "to liaise with" and "assist" their counterparts. The Route Manager's prime focus was to "keep matters under review".

The costs problem

When it came to exercising financial control, the REG was told that the emphasis was to be on the use of a simple system which it was stated would require minimal additional workload for Regional Chief Finance Officers (CFO) with no intention of creating elaborate monitoring systems. These brief words gave no hint of a protracted debate between the Speedlink Business and the

Table 2: Speedlink Business forecasts for end of 1982

Development Plan	1979	1980
Daily out and home trunk services	80	105
Locomotives trunk haul	92	112
Locomotives trip/shunting	82	110
Drivers	508	705
Assistants	78	202
Guards	382	460
Wagons	4,049	4,291
Terminals	371	484
Traffic volume (tonnes)	6.4m	8.2m
Gross receipts (£)	40m	59m
Direct expenses (£)	29m	40m
Contribution (£)	11m	19m

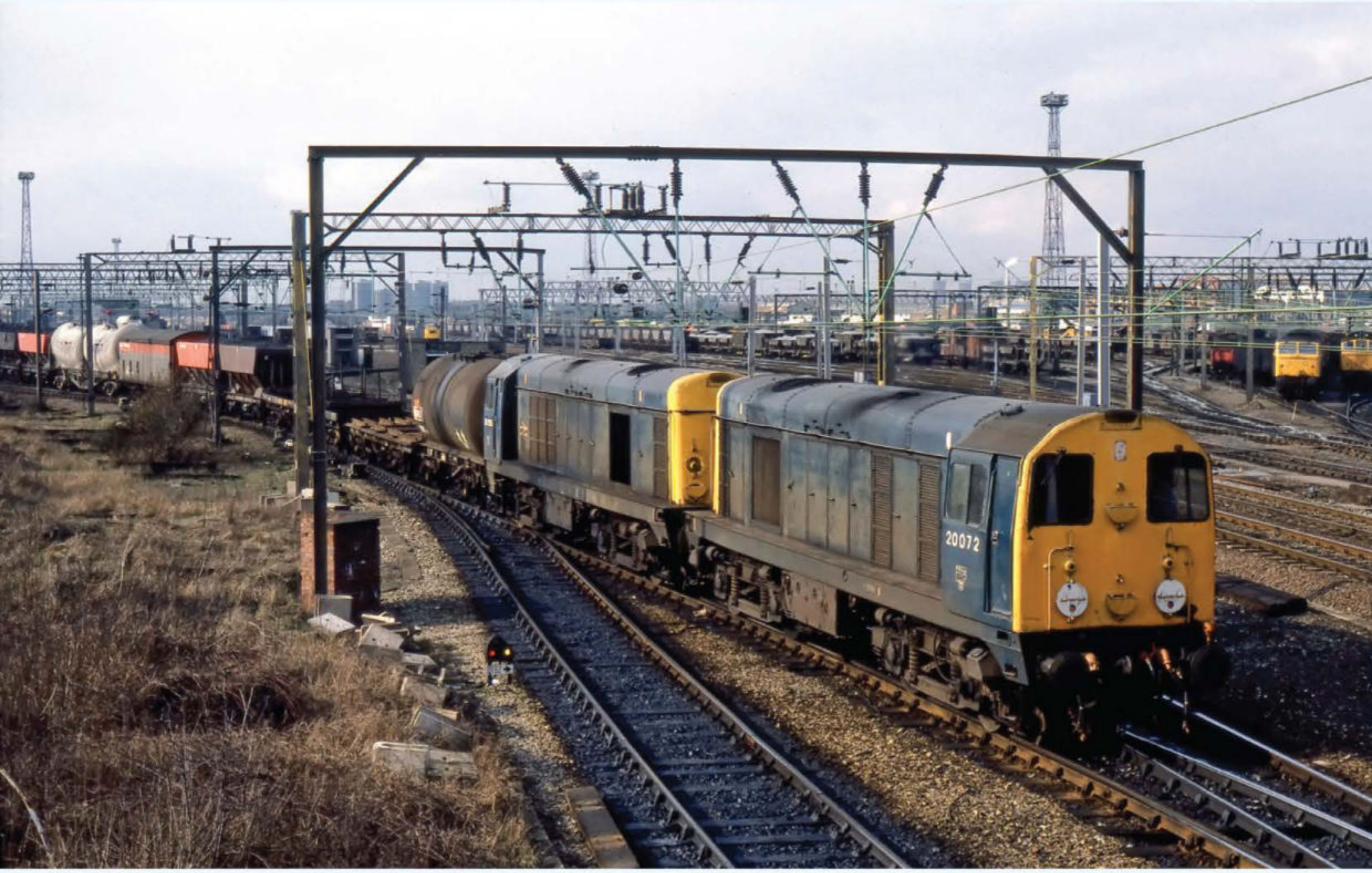
Finance function which had dragged on for nearly a year in relation to the supply of costing information. The Business was burdened by the costs of operating the residual elements of traditional wagonload traffics. At the same time as it was in the process of disengaging and escaping these costs, it was a priority to be able to justify investment in new wagons to grow its portfolio of air-braked services. This balancing act required reliable and timely revenue and cost data to underpin profitability projections. The problem for the Business was that both groups shared the same feeder services, terminals and marshalling yards. The vexed question as to how to attribute the associated costs had proved difficult to resolve and become a contentious issue between CFMs and CFOs.

Essentially the Business wanted to be able to monitor costs on a four-weekly basis but did not have access to an information system capable of delivering what it wanted. Finance managers were lukewarm regarding the usefulness of such data, regarding it as an artificial assumption to think that costs were incurred over such a short timescale. They preferred financial reporting to be restricted to annual results for both revenue and actual costs with a mid-year reassessment if there were substantial changes to service levels. One Regional CFM was so unhappy with the prospect of relying on this methodology to demonstrate profitability he wrote in blunt terms that Speedlink management would be deliberately misleading itself and the Board if it did so. He also thought that if joint costs were not to be fully allocated then Speedlink expenses would be understated by over 40%. A way forward was agreed at a joint meeting in April 1980. The Finance Department undertook to present quarterly revenue data on a flow-by-flow basis, prepare an annual budget for the Speedlink profit centre, but not individual routes, and calculate actual costs to reflect changes to the permanent train plan. Full implementation of Route Management was rolled out in October that year, over two years since the first substantive discussions on the scheme.

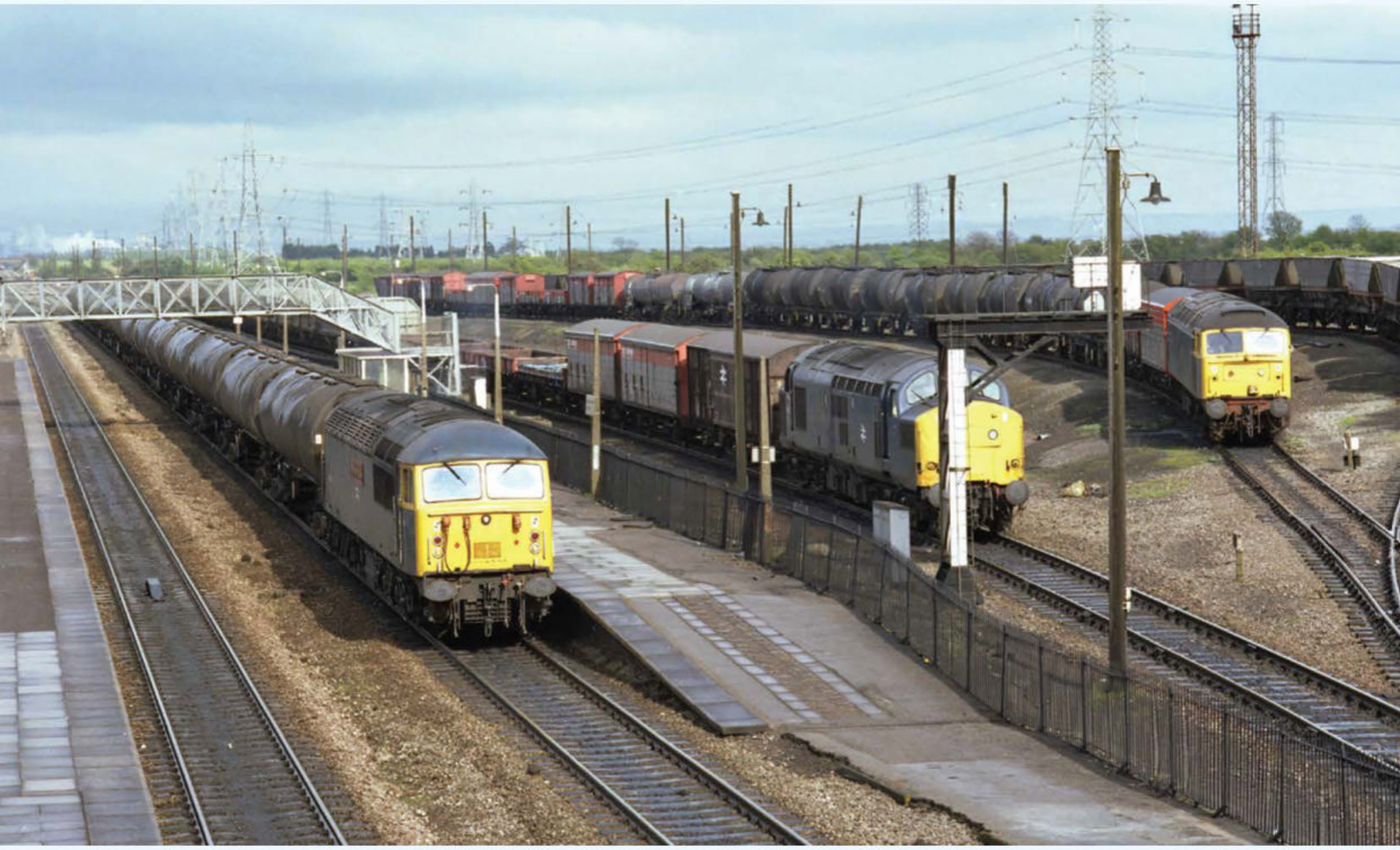
The 1980 Development Plan

An updated Plan was issued in March 1980. Its objectives and timescale remained unchanged, but the scope had widened as the focus shifted to identifying additional worthwhile traffic moving only locally but in substantial volumes. Regionally-led studies purported to demonstrate the viability of these local flows which were confined to areas served by Willesden, Dover, Severn Tunnel Junction, Warrington and Mossend yards. They were expected to generate an additional 1.2 million tonnes annually. The scale of the impact of this planned expansion can be seen in Table 2. *(Left).*

The message that traffic capture forecasts were conservative was reiterated. However, the Plan was realistic enough to highlight risks to successful delivery. These were: uncertainties surrounding the future of its biggest customer the steel industry, the adverse effect on customer confidence if planned service quality was not achieved, the possibility that key switches to privately-owned wagons might not happen and that wagon utilisation standards were not met.



Bescot Yard on 27th March 1985. English Electric Type 1 locomotives Nos.20 56 and 20 072, having arrived in the up direction from the Sutton Park line, are seen propelling a trip service into the Down Reception Sidings where Speedlink traffic was marshalled. The Up Yard seen behind the locomotives dealt with engineering department traffic and the stabling of MGR block loads. In terms of local trip activity Bescot was the busiest yard in the country in 1984 with 65 diagrams Monday-Friday.
(David Rostance)



No.56 032 is passing through Severn Tunnel Junction on the down main with a block train of discharged tanks on 7th May 1986, while Nos.37 142 and 47 308 stand waiting acceptance into the Down Reception Sidings with Speedlink services. At their peak the designated sidings in the Up and Down Yards were dealing with 32 Speedlink trunk trains each weekday. However, South Wales had a surplus of marshalling yard capacity and a review in 1986 led to the complete closure of the Severn Tunnel Junction complex in November 1987 with Speedlink traffic marshalling activity being transferred to Newport (East Usk) and Gloucester New Yard. (John Dedman)

Performance in the early years

A regular four-weekly report appeared in December 1979 measuring operating performance. At this time there were 38 daily out and back services booked to run but on average 12% were being cancelled. This figure rose to 24% in March 1980 but recovered to 18% by July when the number of services had been increased to 48. The punctuality goal was set at arrival at destination within 30 minutes of right time (RT + 30) and was consistently being recorded in the mid-seventies in percentage terms. The best month was April 1980 when 77% of trains met the target. The average load factor was below expectations at 59% over the period December 1979 to July 1980 although this had been adversely affected by a British Steel Corporation industrial dispute and a strike of Sealink officers. Most reports made reference to the capture of new traffic flows but also recorded losses. The latter were ascribed to a variety of factors which included: erratic transit times, poor turn-round of empty wagons, rate increases, blacking action by ASLEF and NUR of steel traffic, failure to meet promised delivery times due to connections missed en route and lower rates offered by Freightliner.

Quarterly Reports came on stream in late 1980 and by the second quarter of 1981 were highlighting a continuing trend of rapid growth to which all commodity sectors had contributed. The punctuality target of 75% for arrivals within RT + 30 was being met consistently (the number of daily out and home trunk services had increased to 78 in May 1981). There was positive news on the expansion of services reflecting the gathering of momentum in the transfer of traffic from ‘old-style’ services and the capture of new business from road. The latter included chipboard, bagged fertilizers, grain, cider and imported Citroën cars.

However, achieving reliability was a real issue because the train plan was in a state of constant flux. Changes were being made on a monthly basis as old wagonload flows were cutover to air-braked services and simultaneously new traffic was being secured. As a result, capacity on trunk trains had to be carefully managed through changes to calling points, marshalling arrangements and timings. Unsurprisingly connections were often missed, or late running occurred as staff on the ground struggled to cope with an ever-changing timetable.

The Report covering periods 4-6 of 1981 contained financial information for the Speedlink profit centre for the first time. The results showed revenue at £5.53 million and “assessed specific expenses” as £4.14 thus delivering a £0.98 million contribution to joint expenses in that quarter. At its 16th September 1981 meeting the REG noted that this was well below budget and the CFM had to concede that there was still a long way to go in achieving a good financial result. However, he was also of the view that “for a product which is still in its early growth phase they are not too disappointing”.

In the same forum the CFM also expressed concern at what he perceived as a lack of faith in Speedlink shown by some senior managers. He called for a reaffirmation of belief in this nascent high quality service group which was attracting new customers.

Further down the management chain there was also evidence of a lack of commitment as witnessed by the poor performance of the running of trial loads for potential customers (about 50% failed to achieve their scheduled transit). The response, perhaps typical of a command-and-control oriented organisation, was to send a personal telex from HQ to Area Managers instructing them to ensure necessary special arrangements were made and connections monitored.

Within the Freight team at the Board there was a recognition at this point that they probably had one to two years to make sure that Speedlink did not operate at a loss as old-style services were progressively withdrawn, and previously shared costs became specific to Speedlink. They were convinced there was plenty of scope for this improvement to be made.

(to be continued)

BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS AND THE BOER WAR 1899-1902 PART ONE

BY BERNICE BAYNHAM

Hostilities in South Africa between Great Britain and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State began on the 11th October 1899; this became known as the Boer War. In Britain, reservists began to be called back to their regiments for active service, and on 3rd November the first volunteer St. John Ambulance men sailed for South Africa.

The British Army suffered early reverses with heavy casualties, so more battalions of the Regular Army were sent out, and as there was no conscription in Britain, it was decided to organise volunteer detachments for foreign service. The Imperial Yeomanry (a volunteer mounted force, mostly organised into companies from individual counties) and companies of Militia and Rifle Volunteers were to see active service. These units, with equipment and horses, had to be transported by rail to ports in England – Bootle, Liverpool, Birkenhead, Southampton, London (Royal Albert Docks), Chatham and Woolwich. Around 40 traction engines were moved by train to Southampton Docks, including four armoured traction engines, but the latter proved to be too heavy for the terrain in South Africa.

Britain's railways were vital in the first six months or so of the war in moving reinforcements to the docks for onward transport to South Africa.

Early departures of Regulars and Reservists

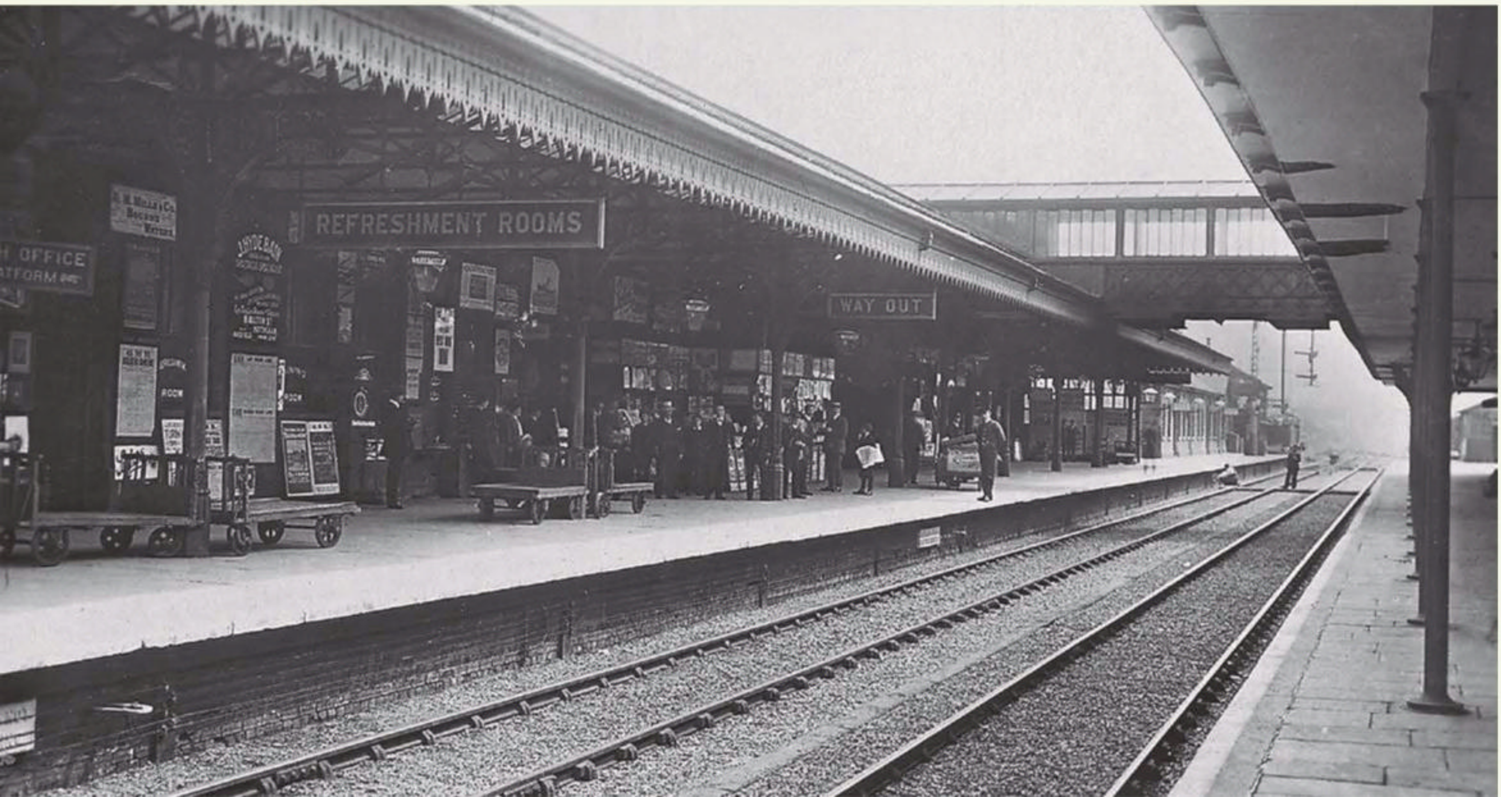
"Over 600 officers and men of the [Army Service] Corps left Aldershot on Friday, and on the same day Chatham and Woolwich sent out over 160. These three detachments met at Southampton, and there embarked with other troops and officers. The departure of the Aldershot contingent was witnessed by large crowds, who thronged the bank above the Government siding long before the first train started at seven in the morning. The troops were marched down to the siding in two detachments, escorted by the bands of the Northampton, Shropshire and Wiltshire regiments. The entraining was conducted with the greatest precision, and without the slightest confusion, and each train steamed off punctually to the minute, amid the cheers of those who were present. Before the signal to start was given the scene at the Government siding was a very picturesque one, and, of course, also deeply interesting and pathetic. While the men were entraining, their relatives and friends gathered in quiet groups at the end of the platform, but on the permission being given the whole front of the train was immediately thickly clustered with women and children who exchanged tearful farewells with their fathers, brothers, and husbands, some of whom they were perhaps destined never to see again. As the bands played 'Auld Lang Syne' the trains moved out, and so long as they were in sight those who were left behind stood watching and waving, and then turned slowly and sadly away." [*The Graphic,* Thursday 19th October 1899]

"Yesterday evening about 40 Belfast reservists of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers left by the 4.30 train for the depot, Omagh. A huge crowd had assembled at the Great Northern Railway station to give them a send-off. So great was the crush at the outside passenger entrance that the patience of the railway officials and the constables on duty was sorely taxed. The reservists, of course, were in their ordinary attire. They were heartily cheered on leaving the station, and all were jolly and in the best of spirits. The leavestaking were numerous and pathetic*." [*Belfast News-Letter,* Sunday 15th October 1899] *sad

Monday 16th October— 125 Reservists of the 2nd Battalion Cheshire Royal Engineers (Railway Volunteers) left Crewe for the headquarters of the Engineers at Chatham. The London & North Western Railway Company gave all the workforce at Crewe Works the morning off, but when the afternoon shift began at 2.00pm, not many had come in for their shift—in one department of 700 men, only seventeen showed up and another of 400 had just one man. Before the men commenced their march to the railway station, they were informed that provided they did well in South Africa and came back with good characters, their places would be kept open for them. The Crewe Engineer Corps was formed in 1887, with the support of the LNWR. It was realised that a corps composed of practical railway engineers might prove to be valuable to the Royal Engineers and the War Office made it a condition that the corps should have a reserve strength of 250 men, should the Royal Engineers ever require them. Over half the Reserve strength of the corps was called up in October 1899 and the remainder in the early months of 1900.

"At different points of the journey from

Grantham station (Great Northern Railway) was possibly the most welcoming of all British railway stations when it came to providing refreshments to troops passing through en route to South Africa. The photograph shows the up main line platform (then Platform 2, today Platform 1) and the large 'Refreshment Rooms' sign is prominent. This is almost certainly the platform where southbound troop trains would have stood for the duration of their halts at Grantham; there was no connection to any other through platform for trains from the north. (Photo courtesy of 'Tracks Through Grantham')



Crewe to Chatham the Reservists came in for some really fine receptions. As soon as the train had steamed out of Crewe station a telegram was despatched to Stafford, and the news quickly spread about the station and the goods yard that the brave volunteers from Crewe had started on their way to the scene of operations in the Transvaal. When the train approached Stafford it slackened speed, and the occupants of the different compartments were not long in realizing where they were. Fog signals had been placed along the line at frequent intervals some distance from the station by way of honouring their comrades from Crewe, while the station was filled with people who cheered lustily as the train passed slowly through. The men were at the windows of the carriages, and there was a general waving of field service caps, handkerchiefs and sticks. At Rugby the train was stopped for five minutes and during that short interval the troops were provided with light refreshments. The scene on the station, which was packed with interested spectators – many of them old Creweites – was one of great excitement. The arrival of the train was the signal for ringing cheers, which were continued almost without cessation during the time that the train remained in the station. Many of the Reservists recognized former colleagues in the workshop at Crewe amongst the crowd, and there were several touching scenes between those who had served their time together and worked side by side during their apprenticeship in Crewe works. The band of the Rugby Steam Sheds was on the platform and played 'God Save the Queen'.

"Another tremendous crowd awaited the arrival of the train at Willesden Junction, and the utmost enthusiasm prevailed. Here the general manager of the company (Lieutenant Colonel Harrison), who is an officer of the railway staff corps, joined the train and journeyed with the troops as far as Victoria. The train was first of all run into the London, Brighton, and South Coast station at Victoria, then backed out and afterwards brought into the London, Chatham and Dover station. Here the men had a wait of 35 minutes, and Captain Tandy gave them permission to go and partake of refreshments, and spend the time pending the departure as best they thought fit. As a matter of fact he gave them an entirely free hand to amuse themselves to their heart's content. Just before the train was timed to start for Chatham – 4.22 – the order to form up was given, and in a few minutes the men had entrained, and were speeding along in the direction of Chatham. They reached their destination at 5.30." [*The Crewe Guardian,* Saturday 21st October 1899]

Also in late October, 30 officers and 878 men of the Royal Irish Rifles travelled overnight by special train from Belfast to Queenstown (now Cobh) and soon after that the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders left Kingsbridge (now Heuston) station, Dublin, also for Queenstown; the 700 men of the Argylls required two special trains. An accident to one of the boiler pipes of the second train at Inchicore caused a short delay. Crowds to see the troops off from Belfast and Dublin stations were generally enthusiastic. Some transports that had departed from Liverpool called at Queenstown to take on board the additional troops.

Reservists' families

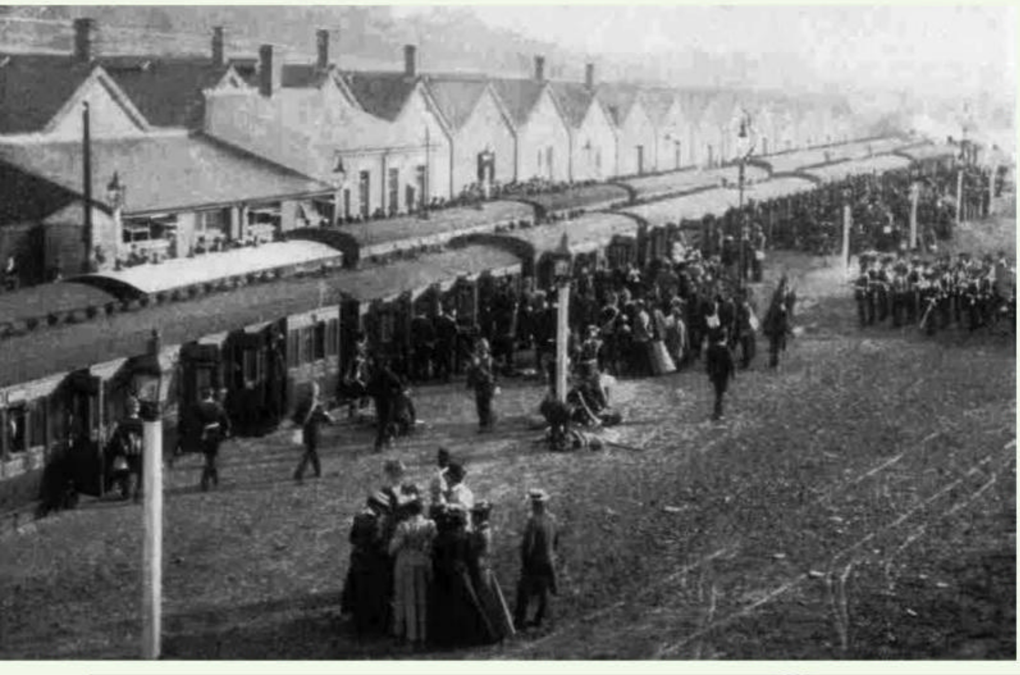
The directors of the Great Western Railway Company have made the following arrangements with regard to those of the company's staff who, being Army Reservists, have been summoned to resume military service in connection with the war:

"(1) The posts hitherto filled by Reservists are to be kept for them on their return to civil life. If it is not practicable to keep open the identical posts, then others equally good will be found.

"(2) The families are to continue to enjoy the full benefits of the system of privilege tickets for railway employes, under which tickets at one quarter of the ordinary fares are obtainable for marketing or other purposes.

"(3) On those portions of the company's system where the concession of obtaining coal at cheap rates is in force, the families are to be allowed the same privileges as though the Reservists were still performing their railway duties.

Troops departing from the Government Siding, Aldershot, during the Boer War. (Copyright holder unknown)



"(4) The company will, at their own expense, pay the contributions of such Reservists as belong to the Great Western Railway Widows' and Orphans' Fund, for such period as the rules under which that fund is administered will permit, or until further notice.

"(5) The company will also, at their own expense, make good the arrears of subscriptions of Reservists who are members of the Great Western Railway Pension Fund, when, on return to railway work, they are re-admitted to the benefits of that society. This will ensure to them continuity of membership in the qualifying term for pension.

"(6) The company will keep under observation the circumstances of each family, with a view to further assisting, up to a point reasonably representing the requirements of the case, necessitous and deserving families-after taking due account of the income derivable from Army maintenance pay, allocation from soldiers' Army pay, grants from funds, or other sources—the desire of the directors being to enable the wives and children of the Reservists to keep together their homes during the temporary absence of the head of the family. This arrangement will apply independently of any consideration as to whether or not the wives and children are entitled to maintenance benefits from the War Office.

"It is desired that chiefs of departments will appoint members of the staff to make themselves acquainted with the circumstances of each family, in order that any changes which occur may be duly reported to the general manager and be dealt with.

"In the case of every Reservist who has left behind a family, or who is known to have materially contributed to the support of a widowed mother, or other dependent relatives, it is desired that, in addition to any allowances that may be receivable under the provisions of this circular, or in any other way whatever, the families may each receive from the company, during the week immediately preceding Christmas, a gift of one sovereign."

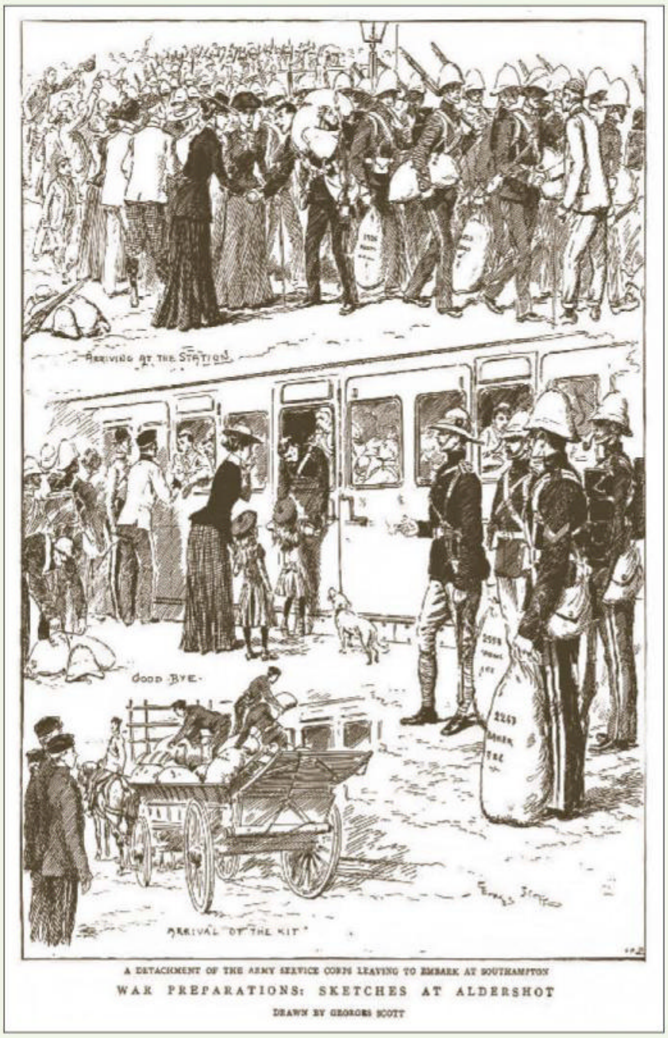
The Great Western Railway staff and platelayers at Roath station, Cardiff, decided to contribute 1d in the £ of their weekly wages to the Reservists' Fund.
[both the above in December 1899]

Goods stations used by troop trains

Saturday 11th November saw Brunswick (Cheshire Lines) station used by three troop trains – this station had closed to passengers in 1874. "Between eight and ten o'clock three special trains conveying soldiers arrived in the Brunswick Station (Cheshire Lines), where every facility was offered for the quick detraining of horses and men. The troops consisted of half of the 61st Battery of the Royal (Howitzer) Artillery, who had travelled from Woolwich, and a troop of the 13th Hussars, and a detachment of Royal Engineers, who entrained at Aldershot. As each section proceeded to the Harrington Dock shed, where the *Montfort* lay, they were cheered lustily by a crowd of spectators which lined the whole of the route, while hundreds looked down on to the soldiers from the staircases of the Overhead Railway Company and other coigns of vantage. On arrival in the shed, the troops were, by the generosity of Mr. A. L. Jones, of the Elder-Dempster Line, provided with a substantial breakfast, and the same gentleman also had placed on board the *Montfort* two half-pound tins of tobacco for each of the men. These generous and thoughtful acts were highly appreciated by the soldiers." [*Liverpool Mercury,* Tuesday 14th November 1899]

Nine Elms station had closed to passengers in 1848, but continued to be open for goods traffic, and it was the departure point from London for the Royal Horse Guards and the 2nd Life Guards on Wednesday 29th November. The 102 Horse Guards troopers were mounted and reached the station yard at 9.30am, where their horses were immediately entrained in boxes; the Life Guards then arrived and while they were waiting on the platform began to sing 'Soldiers of the Queen', accompanied by one of their number on a cornet. The special train then departed for Southampton to the accompaniment of cheers and waving of handkerchiefs.

Bankfield station, Bootle, which had always been for goods traffic only, was the destination of a troop train of Lancashire Yeomanry, with their horses, in February 1900.


ARRIVING AT THE STATION
GOOD BYE
ARRIVAL OF THE KIT
A DETACHMENT OF THE ARMY SERVICE CORPS LEAVING TO EMBARK AT SOUTHAMPTON
WAR PREPARATIONS: SKETCHES AT ALDERSHOT
DRAWN BY GEORGES SCOTT

The departure of the Army Service Corps from the Government Siding, Aldershot, in October 1899. (*The Graphic*)

The Queen's Chocolate Box

An unusual item transported by rail to Southampton Docks in mid-December was 40,000 tin boxes of chocolate made by Cadbury, of Birmingham, a gift from the Queen to the troops in South Africa. The chocolate manufacturers Cadbury, Fry and Rowntree, all Quaker-owned businesses, refused to accept payment for the boxes, instead donating them, and a total of 123,000 tins was ultimately sent out.

"One of the Queen's gift chocolate boxes sent out to our soldiers in South Africa is now in the possession of Mr. W. W. Heseltine, Goods Superintendent of the Midland Station, to whom it was sent from South Africa by his son, Mr. Ernest Heseltine, who is with the Army Medical Service Corps, with one layer of chocolate remaining. It is an interesting memento of a historic incident in connection with the memorable war. The strongly-made tin box, bearing a portrait of the Queen and her Majesty's kindly greeting to her soldiers – "best wishes for a happy new year," will, we doubt not, be one of Mr. Heseltine's most treasured possessions." [*Bath Chronicle,* Thursday 22nd February 1900]

Civilian hospitals and the Princess Christian Hospital Train

A number of civilian hospitals was sent out from Britain, subscribed for by donors, one being the Portland Hospital, which was mostly organised by Captain and Mrs. Bagot and largely paid for by the Duke of Portland.

"The arrangements for the departure of the 'Portland Hospital' Red Cross Society are now complete. Lord and Lady Henry Bentinck, Captain and Mrs. Josceline Bagot, with four hospital nurses and other details leave Waterloo Station by special saloon on the 2.15 p.m. train on Saturday the 9th, and embark at Southampton on the *Tantallon Castle* for South Africa. The greater part of the staff of the hospital, together with the heavy stores and ambulance men, will be taken on the *Majestic* from Liverpool, about the middle of next week". [*The Westmorland Gazette,* Saturday 9th December 1899]

"There has just been completed in the Midland metropolis, to the order of the admirable Red Cross Society, a very interesting hospital train, intended to be used at the rear of the British lines in South Africa. The train, which has been completed in ten weeks, consists of seven carriages, and will be known as the Princess Christian Hospital train. Her Royal Highness, accompanied by Lord Wantage and a large party, have paid a private visit to Birmingham to inspect the train, in the construction of which the Princess has taken the greatest interest. Humanitarian concerns are having naturally more attention in the present campaign than at any anterior date in war's annals, which is something to say." [*The Rothwell Times,* Friday 22nd December 1899]

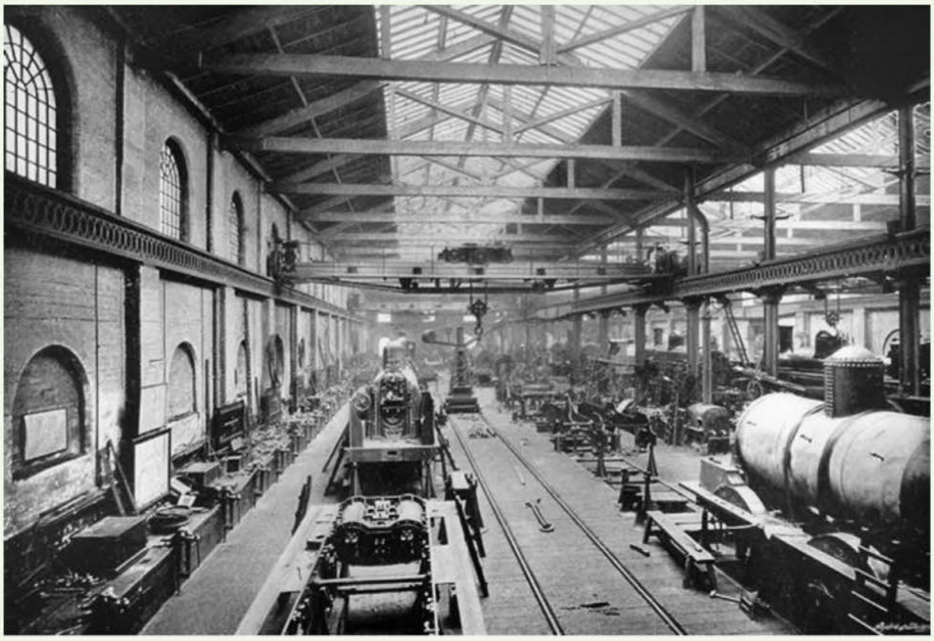
The whole train was constructed in less than three months by the Birmingham Railway Carriage and Waggon Company Ltd., of Smethwick. Private John Black, of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, a Penrith man, was employed on the hospital train in South Africa and he wrote to the *Mid-Cumberland and North Westmorland Herald* on 19th April 1900:

"I will give you a description of the train, which may interest you. The train consists of seven carriages which are numbered 1, 2, 3, and so on. No.1 carriage contains the soiled linen store, the nurses' sleeping quarters (there are two), and two beds for two invalid officers. No.2 is divided into three parts; one portion is the medical officers' sleeping quarters, another is the dining room, and the third is the surgery, where all the medical and surgical instruments are kept. No.3 coach is used as an officers' sick ward, but if there are no officers to be brought in, then this coach is used as a privates' sick ward. Nos.4, 5, and 6 are used as privates' sick wards. No.7 is divided into three parts – the kitchen, storeroom, and a place for the guard. There are two cooks in the last carriages. In each carriage there are twenty-two beds; eighteen for patients and the remainder for orderlies, or those who look after the patients. The beds are placed one above the other in three tiers, just like those on a ship. There is also a lavatory, and a little stove which is used to boil water or keep the ward warm when it is required. Each ward is looked after by a ward master and two orderlies. The latter have to keep the ward clean and look after the patients whilst they are on board.

"The train is supposed to carry 72 sick men and two sick officers. On one trip we (the staff) had to look after 76 men, some of the patients using the orderlies' beds. Most of our journeys have taken place during the night. Then the orderlies are on night duty. Sometimes they have four hours' duty and four hours' sleep, viz., from 10pm to 2am and from 2am to 6 am respectively. The orderly has to look after the wants and comforts of the men. The train has been greatly admired by those who have seen its interior. Several generals and important officers have seen it, and on one occasion Prince Christian came on board. [Prince Christian Victor was the eldest son of Princess Christian, a daughter of Queen Victoria, and was a major in the King's Royal Rifle Corps; he died in South Africa of enteric fever in October 1900.] The train was brought in cases from Britain in the steamer *Raglan Castle.* Many of the cases were so large that it took the men who were unloading them a long time to get them out. The train was rebuilt in about eight days by the Durban carriage builders. The trial trip of the train took place on Saturday, March 17, when it went to a place called Pinetown, which is about 21 miles from Durban. There were on board about 100 persons amongst whom were Sir John Furley, the designer of the train, and Sir Percival Scott, R.N. commander of HMS *Terrible.*"

Home casualties

One man who didn't get out to South Africa was Private Sam Maynard, a reservist, who was called back to his regiment, the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, for active service. With



The Erecting Shop at Crewe Works, c1890. Sapper H. Thompson received a silver-mounted walking stick from his workmates in No.2 Erecting Shop before he departed for South Africa in October 1899. (Wikipedia, public domain)

another soldier, he went to Preston station on 17th January 1900 around 6.15pm to meet some friends. Rather than use the footbridge to get to another platform, he decided to cross over the rails, despite his friends' warning, and also that of a porter who shouted that there was a train approaching. He ignored them and was just climbing on to the opposite platform when a Rochdale to Blackpool express came through, a buffer catching Maynard, causing him to fall between the train and the platform; he died half an hour later.

Another was Sergeant Donald McPherson of the Cameron Highlanders, who had a month's furlough from Aldershot and was travelling to Inverness (and possibly on to the Outer Hebrides) on the London to Glasgow limited mail train, when he appeared to mistake a corridor carriage door for the lavatory door while the train was near Norton Bridge, Staffordshire. At the high speed the train was travelling, his landing on the permanent way proved fatal.

The determination to get home to his family by William Porter of Leigh, Lancashire, cost him his life. *The Leigh Chronicle,* of Friday 20th April 1900, reported:

"On Monday morning Mr. J. W. Barlow, deputy coroner, held an inquiry, at the Church Inn, Westleigh, into the circumstances attending the death of William Porter, aged 28, of Eckersley-street, Leigh, a reservist in the 5th Lancashire Fusiliers, which regiment is at present stationed at Chatham. Inspector Atkinson was present on behalf of the L. and N. W. Railway Co. It appears that the deceased was travelling very early on Friday morning from Manchester by the express train to Wigan, and when near Dangerous Corner, Westleigh Lane, he leaped from the moving train and seems to have fallen down the embankment. The back of his head, face, and forehead were cut.

"Alice Porter, Eckersley-street, Leigh, wife of the deceased, said her husband, a private in the 5th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers and reservist, left home on the 19th February. He sent a letter last week that he had obtained leave and was coming home for Easter. That was the last she heard of him.

"Abraham Clegg, 12 Beaconfield-street, Bolton, said on the 13th inst. he was the guard in charge of the 1.05am Manchester to Wigan. There was a slow between Ordsall Green and Eccles owing to bells being out of order [ie in the signal boxes]. From Eccles to Wigan the train ran about forty miles an hour without stopping. On getting to Wigan a porter came to him and told him that some passengers had said a man had jumped out of the train. He then went up to the five passengers, and one of them said they were in the same compartment with the deceased and saw him jump out of the train somewhere near Hindley Green station. Witness told him they were a bonny lot of men to let a man jump out of the moving train. He asked the passengers if the deceased made any remark before jumping out of the train, and the reply was that deceased made some remark about Leigh. He arranged for a search party to go out, and he understood that an engine and men were sent out as far as Tyldesley, but they did not see the body. At 5.25am witness left Wigan with a fish train for Bolton. Witness was specially on the look-out for the deceased, and saw the body lying in a gully at the foot of the embankment. He stopped at the first box near Chowbent station and arranged with the Hindley Green officials to have the body removed.

"Robert Reid, 923 Atherton-road, Hindley Green, platelayer on the London and North Western Railway, said about half-past five on Friday morning, he was informed by Samuel Massey, foreman platelayer on the Platt Bridge length, that a soldier was lying in the grid outside the line. He found the dead body of the deceased about twenty-five minutes to six in the grid between Chowbent and Hindley Green Stations in the borough of Leigh. Deceased's face was covered with blood, and there was a wound at the back of the head as if he had fallen on a stone.

"P.C. Mercer said from what he saw of the body he concluded that the neck was broken.

"The Coroner said they all had a general feeling that that might have been prevented if the other passengers in the compartment had been severe with the deceased. A wilful man in a carriage might make a great deal of trouble before he got out. On the other hand the deceased might have suddenly opened the door and jumped out, but as to that they had got no evidence. The inference was very strong that the deceased jumped out of the train thinking he was near home.

"The jury returned a verdict that deceased jumped from an express train whilst in motion near Dangerous Corner, Westleigh Lane, Leigh, and came by his death through the injuries then and there sustained.

"Deceased leaves a widow and five children."

More departures

Horses sometimes got their own train. "A special train steamed out of Leamington on Wednesday night, containing twenty-four magnificent chargers for the 17th Lancers. The animals were sent to Aldershot, and will be almost immediately shipped at Southampton for the front." [*Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, Friday 5th January 1900]

"The officials and employees of the West Yard Engineering Department of the Taff Vale Railway Company entertained Trooper Ivor Lewis and Private George Common (two of their apprentices who have volunteered and been accepted for the front) at a smoking concert in the Alexandra Hotel, Cardiff, on Friday night. During the evening Mr. Riches (superintendent of the Taff Vale Railway) presented to each of the troopers a case of pipes, a spirit flask, and a quantity of tobacco." [*Evening Express,* Monday 5th February 1900]

Four Volunteers from Milford Haven "marched to the Railway Station to meet the 4.40pm train for Cardiff. The streets were lined with spectators, and business both in town and on the Docks was at a standstill for the time being. A few minutes before the departure of the train, the bands struck up 'Auld Lang Syne,' the immense crowd taking up the refrain. The Guard's whistle was the signal for the next move, and almost simultaneously with the engine's whistle there went forth from a thousand throats a mighty cheer of good wishes which could almost be heard from far off Pretoria." [*Haverfordwest and Milford Haven Telegraph,* 7th February 1900]

At the same time as soldiers were leaving or returning home in special trains, normal passenger services were being run. As the *Evening Express,* a Cardiff newspaper, reported: "Considerable dissatisfaction is being voiced at Swansea with respect to the arrangements made by the Great Western Railway Company for the convenience of ordinary passengers when Volunteers are leaving the town for the front. On each occasion, when it is known that local Volunteers have been going, the station has been at once besieged, and no one can get in or out without infinite trouble. The station was blocked by a huge crowd on Sunday evening, and after the labour of a dozen policemen many missed the train, and a special had to be run." This was no doubt the same situation at other large stations with frequent passenger services.

At Porthmadog, the *North Wales Express*, 16th February, said: "At the [Cambrian] station the scene was remarkable. Thousands of people crowded the platform on either side of the railway, on the bridge, and on every available piece of ground from which a view of the men could be had. A goods train passed through the station and exploded fog signals, and this drew forth vociferous cheers from the crowd.”

The departure from Oldham of fifteen men of the Duke of Lancaster’s Own Yeomanry, on Monday, 15th January, was by special train from Mumps station; this was going to Talbot Road station, Blackpool, via Rochdale where more men of the same Company would be picked up, and, after a fortnight’s training in Blackpool, the Company would then depart for the Cape. “The special train was shunted into a siding in Wormald’s yard, where the horses were boxed. A number of police guarded the entrance to the yard, but a good number nevertheless managed to gain admission. After the last horse had been boxed the train withdrew and a saloon was attached to it. In the course of a minute or two later it re-entered the siding, and the men began to take their seats. Just then the crowd broke through the police cordon, and rushed into the yard, the efforts of the police proving useless against the furious inrush. Several people were knocked down, but no-one was seriously hurt. While the men were wishing their friends au revoir, and they in turn were receiving the hearty wishes of their friends for a speedy and safe return, the ‘Soldiers of the Queen’ and ‘Tommy Atkins’ were struck up, but were not very lustily taken up by the populace, the want of a leader being greatly manifest. However, as the whistle of the engine sounded, and the train departed, at ten minutes to twelve, there was plenty of cheering and waving of handkerchiefs and hats, and the men started on their journey.” [*Oldham Standard,* Saturday 20th January 1900]

There was more excitement in Oldham on Thursday, the 25th of the same month, when ten St. John Ambulance Brigade men left on the 11.14pm train for Manchester, there to catch the midnight train to London, where they would report to the corps’ headquarters. These ten men were employed in jobs such as cotton operative, labourer, sawyer and grinder and could never have imagined that they would have the opportunity to travel outside their home country. Again, a huge crowd was on hand in the streets of Oldham and outside Mumps station to see them off.

Nine Elms Goods Station reopened to passengers for one day only in November 1899 when two troop trains departed from there to Southampton, 51 years after it had closed to passenger traffic. The station had opened in 1838 and the station building was demolished in the 1960s. (Wikimedia Commons)

Eleven Volunteers of B (St. Albans) Company Bedfordshire Regiment, left from St. Albans station (now St. Albans Abbey), on Wednesday 24th January. “At the entrance to the station there was a general scramble to get upon the platform, and several of the City Police, in charge of Head-constable Blatch, rendered valuable assistance to the railway officials in their endeavours to keep back the crowd. Finding that they would be unable to get on to the platform, many spectators took advantage of the halt to express to their departing friends, very sincere wishes for their safety and success. The order was given that only ticket-holders would be admitted to the station, but the occasion was not one for a stringent observation of such a rule, so that a good number were able to obtain admission who were not in possession of the necessary fragment of pasteboard; but others, in their eagerness, got over the difficulty by booking to Park Street. The crowd outside the platform was immense, and they secured an excellent view of all that was proceeding by climbing the bank opposite the booking-office, which overlooks the greater portion of the platform. In the course of a few minutes the train drew up, and the men, commanded by Lieut. Braithwaite, marched to the compartments reserved for them. and having deposited their rifles there, they were free to pass in and out amongst their friends, the band playing meanwhile such selections as ‘Rule Britannia’, ‘Britannia the pride of the Ocean’ and ‘A life on the ocean wave’, the latter no doubt bringing to the minds of the men the voyage in store for them.

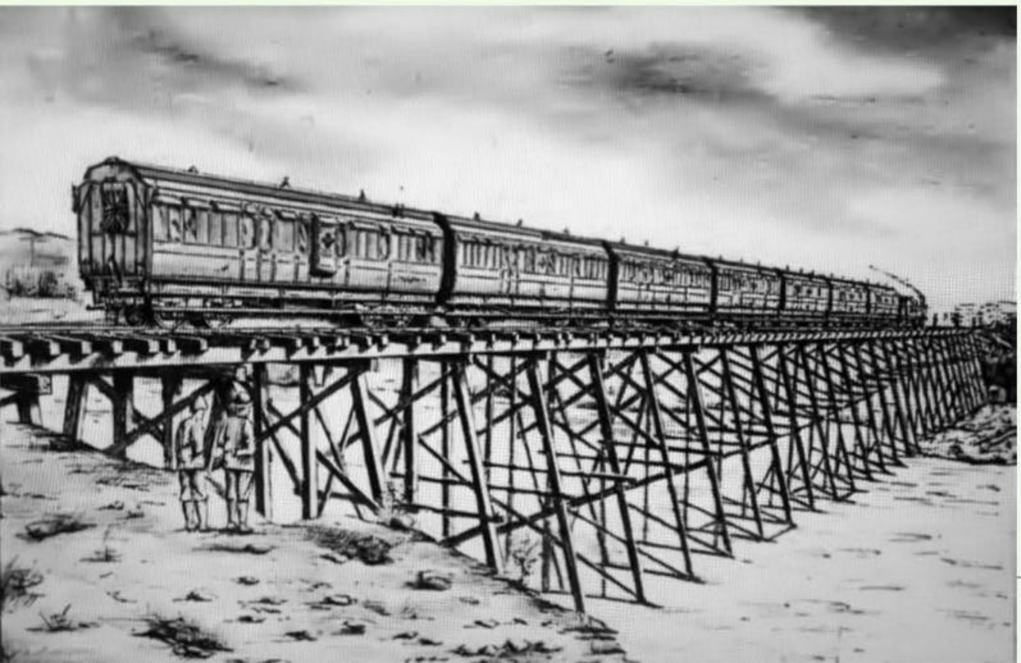
“Numerous affecting incidents were to be witnessed. Some of those of the gentler sex failed in their attempts to conceal their emotion, and the leave-taking of those who had been close friends was in many cases most touching. The staff of the Post-office was largely represented, and the postmen, ‘shouldering’ their comrade – Pte. Harrison – conveyed him, amidst hearty cheers, to his compartment.

“The minutes which remained fleeted all too quickly by, as cheer upon cheer rang from a thousand throats. ‘Auld Lang Syne’ was lustily sung, and the men having entrained, the band led the National Anthem, and then was heard the whistle of the guard, and the request ‘Stand back, please’, as the train, amidst deafening shouts, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, steamed out of the station. The stationmaster, in anticipation of the event, had had placed upon the lines several fog signals, which admirably answered the purpose of a salute, in honour of the chivalrous band as they left for Watford, en route for Berkhamstead, where they received their kit and necessary uniform, and after partaking of dinner with the Volunteers from other companies of the battalion, they proceeded to Bedford via Bletchley.

“At Park Street, through the instrumentality of Mr. Silvester, a small demonstration, as the train halted, was arranged.” [*The Herts Advertiser,* Saturday 27th January 1900]

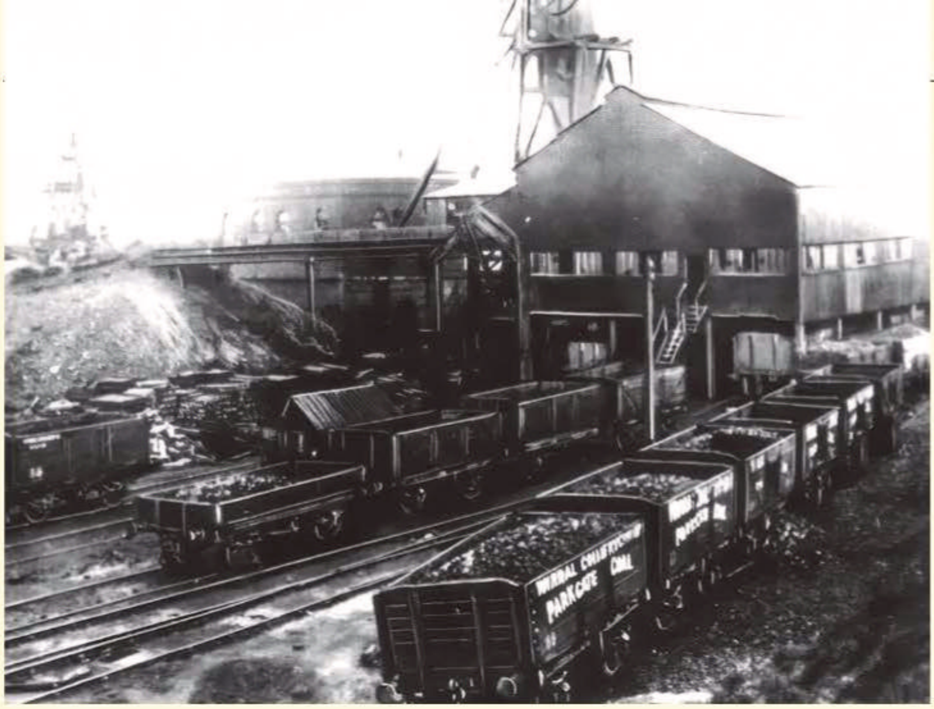
(to be continued)

The Princess Christian Hospital Train in South Africa. The world’s first purpose-built hospital train, it was constructed by the Birmingham Railway Carriage and Waggon Company Limited, Smethwick, in just ten weeks, taken apart and packed to be shipped to Durban, then reconstructed there. (Copyright holder unknown)



THE BIRKENHEA
REVISITED PART TWO

BY STAN YATES



An undated view of the pithead at the Wirral Colliery in Little Neston. Coalmining in the area had recommenced in 1874 initially as the Neston Colliery Company and latterly as the Wirral Colliery (1915) Ltd. before final closure in 1927. The colliery's own wagons are evident in the foreground, the owners having chosen to use the name Parkgate on the wagons as the railhead with the Birkenhead Joint was located at that point. The colliery was unusual in having underground canals for the movement of coal from the coal face to the shaft bottom. (Anthony Annakin-Smith Collection)

Freight

The Hooton to West Kirby branch line passed through a very rural area and as you would expect freight with a local origin included livestock and milk from the many farms along the route. There was also fish from Parkgate and coal from the colliery at Little Neston. In the twentieth century, there was through traffic in the form of coal from distant collieries bound for Birkenhead and in the 1950s traffic for the new Cadbury's factory at Moreton.

Coalmining at Little Neston had ceased in 1855 but was restarted in 1874 and connected by rail to sidings at Parkgate station. The Neston Colliery Company went into liquidation in 1885 and its assets were taken over by a new company, the Wirral Colliery Co., which itself went into liquidation in 1914, and its assets were then taken over by the Wirral Colliery (1915) Ltd. At its peak in the 1890s, the colliery was producing 100,000 tons of coal per annum.[19]

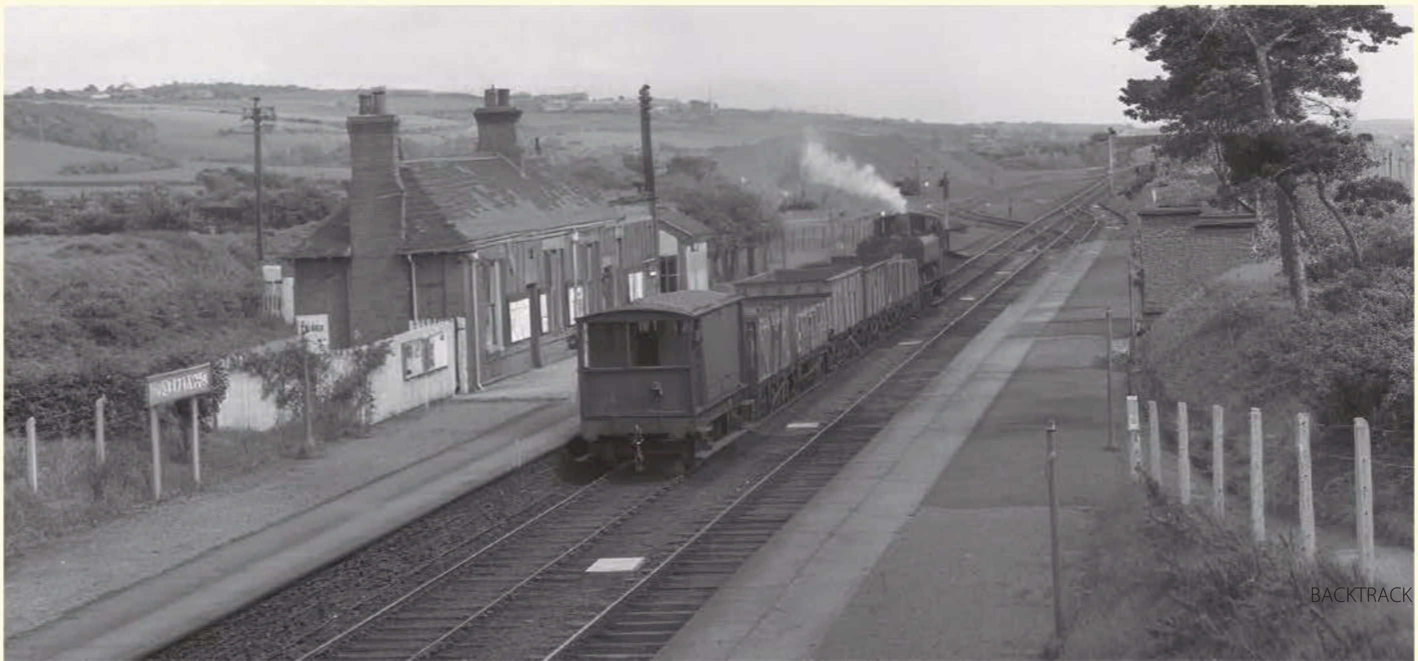
In 1870 there was only one dedicated goods train serving the stations along the line, departing Parkgate at 11.15am with stops at Neston and Hadlow Road arriving at Hooton at 12.10pm before returning from Hooton at 12.30pm and arriving back at Parkgate at 1.15pm. The working timetable indicates that all services were authorised to carry goods traffic and we may conclude that in general trains carried both passengers and freight.[20]

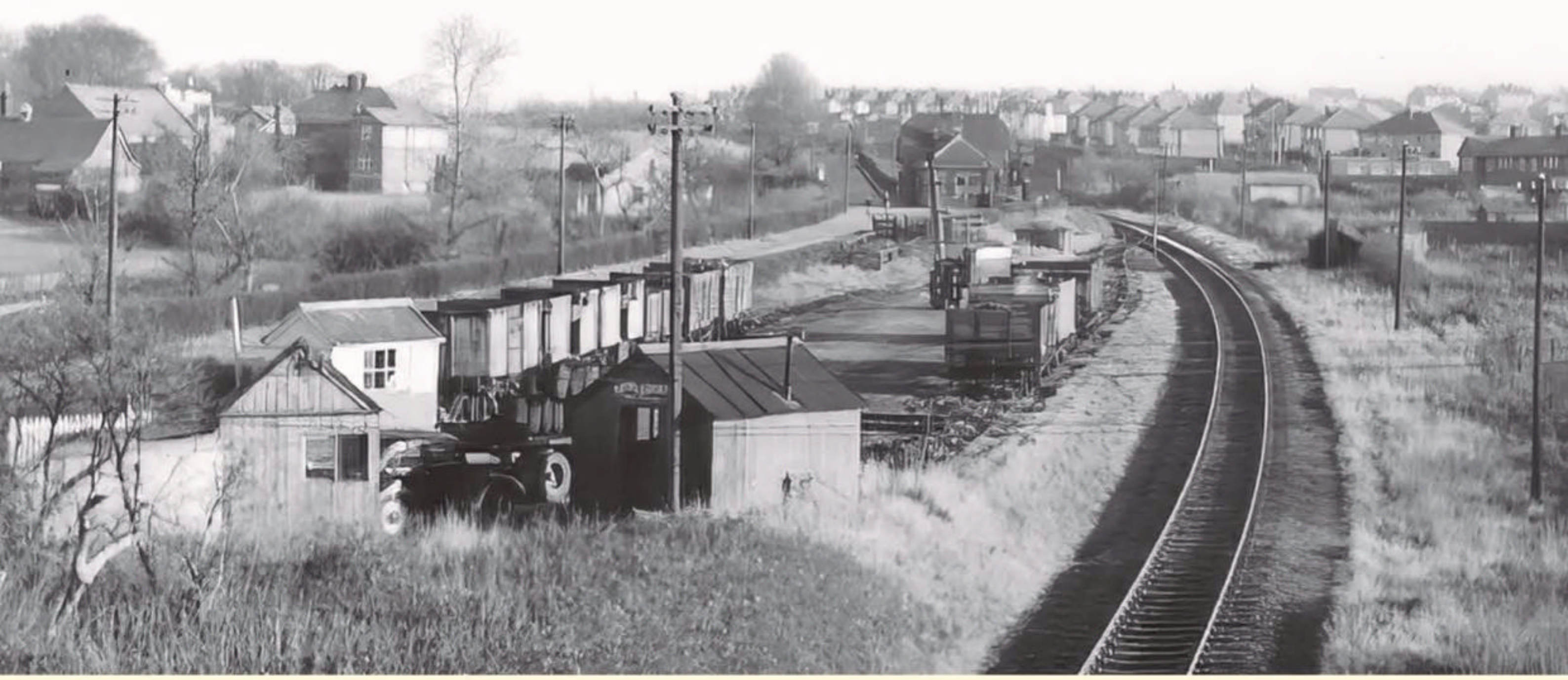
There was only one dedicated goods train in the London & North Western Railway 1882 working timetable: the 1.00pm Parkgate to Hooton service arriving at Hooton at 1.30pm which stopped only at Neston station. It would seem that mixed trains were still the order of the day. There was ample time for the 7.15am, 9.15am and 2.35pm trains from Hooton, Monday to Friday, to engage in shunting activity at Parkgate, attaching and detaching coal wagons, before returning at 8.00am, 10.00am and 3.30pm respectively.[21]

By 1890 it would seem that freight traffic was being dealt with separately. The Hooton to Parkgate Joint Goods departed Hooton at 9.30am arriving at Parkgate at 9.50am with no intermediate stops. The return Parkgate to Hooton service departed Parkgate at 10.55am arriving at Hooton at 11.23am with just the one stop at Neston. There was now a Hooton to West Kirby service departing Hooton at 12.00pm arriving at West Kirby at 1.12pm with brief stops at all stations along the way except Thurstaston. The return West Kirby to Hooton service departed West Kirby at 2.00pm and arrived at Hooton at 4.50pm with stops at all stations except Neston, including a lengthy stop of one and a half hours at Parkgate.[22]

In 1900 there was a number of freight trains connecting Birkenhead with West Kirby via Hooton. Where exactly in Birkenhead is not specified in the working timetable except 'Birkenhead Goods' is beyond Grange Lane and we may guess that it is Morpeth Dock. The 11.00am joint goods from Birkenhead departed Hooton at 1.50pm having stopped at Lever Brothers' siding in Port Sunlight on the way arriving at West Kirby at 3.40pm. There were two trains departing West Kirby, the first at 2.20pm, departing Hooton at 5.28pm and arriving at Birkenhead at 5.50pm and the second at 5.25pm, departing Hooton at 8.05pm and arriving Birkenhead at 8.35pm. There was also a daily service from Hooton at 12.05pm to West Kirby and from Hooton to Parkgate which departed Hooton at 8.20am. This was presumably an empty mineral train which

An ex-GWR '57XX' 0-6-0PT pauses at Thurstaston on Wednesday 30th April 1952 with the 12.16pm freight train from West Kirby to Chester via Hooton, arriving Chester Brook Lane at 3.40pm. This particular train was a Chester Western Region duty and before that a Chester Great Western duty. The locomotive has been identified as either No.3776 or No.5776 but these were both South Wales engines at the time. Thurstaston station closed to freight traffic on 7th May 1962.
(W. A. Camwell/Stephenson Locomotive Society)





Neston station was opened for traffic by the Birkenhead Joint on 1st October 1866. In this view the photographer is standing with his back to the former Great Central line looking north east towards the station buildings right of centre. The yard was still busy with coal traffic on 30th December 1959. The station was renamed Neston South for goods purposes in July 1950 but was closed to passenger traffic on 17th September 1956 and to freight traffic on 7th May 1962. (Mike Lewis)

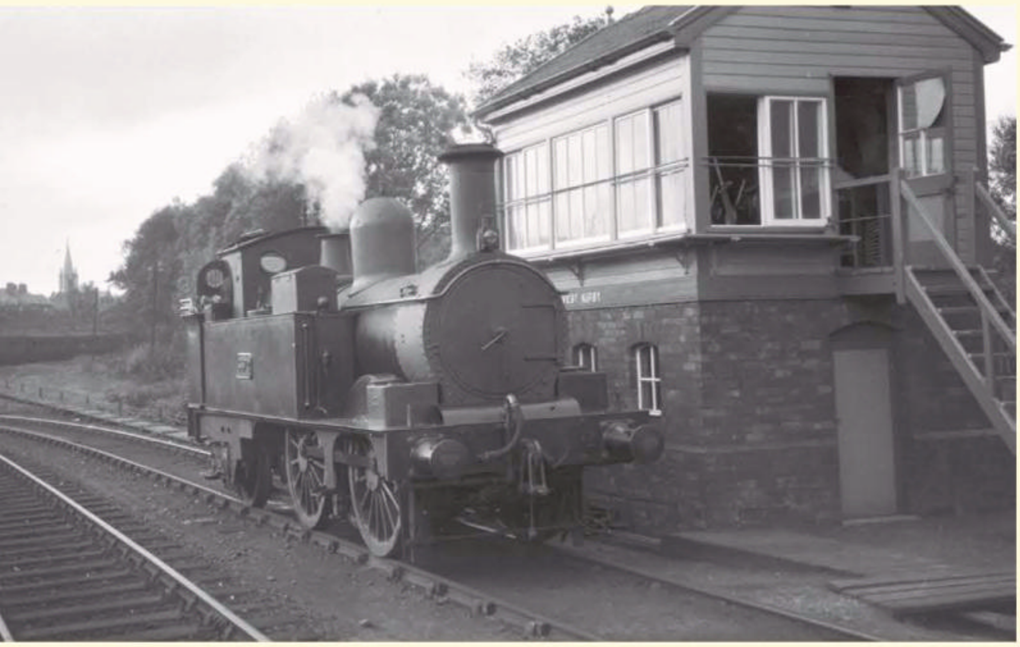
returned from Parkgate at 9.35am with coal from the colliery at Neston. The services to and from Parkgate ran as required.[23]

The 1906 LNWR working timetable contained the following statements about working the line between Hooton, Parkgate, Heswall and West Kirby:

"On arrival at Hooton the engine of the 5.30 a.m. from Chester picks up the Wirral Colliery empties and [leaving Hooton at 7.20am] takes them to Parkgate, does the work there usually done by the [former] 8.20 a.m. from Hooton, and then returns to Hooton at 8.30 a.m. The [former] 8.20 a.m. Hooton to Parkgate, leaves at 7.35 a.m. with 18 minerals or goods, detaches them at Parkgate, and returns to Hooton attached to the Chester engine and van, at 8.30 a.m., unless there is coal traffic to be worked to Hooton, in which case the train runs at its booked time, *viz.*, 9.40 a.m. The Chester engine and men leave Hooton for West Kirby at 9.42 a.m. with 18 minerals, attach at Parkgate the 18 left there by the 7.35 a.m. from Hooton, and take this combined load to West Kirby, returning from there at 11.5 a.m.

"If the traffic for the West Kirby line is heavy and it is considered advisable to run another trip with West Kirby traffic, it must be run at 11.50 a.m. to Heswall, detaching the traffic there, the engine and van returning from Heswall at 12.40 p.m. When necessary the 12.00 noon from [Birkenhead] Grange Lane to Hooton must be sent forward from the latter station at 12.35 p.m. with 18 wagons of coal to Heswall. The load must be detached there, and the engine and van returned to Hooton at 1.25 p.m., after which it works the 1.50 p.m. trip at 2.35 p.m. and arrives at West Kirby as at present. The traffic detached at Heswall by the 11.50 a.m. from Hooton must be taken forward to West Kirby by the 12.0 noon goods train from Hooton, and that worked to Heswall by the 12.35 p.m. from Hooton, must be picked up and taken forward to West Kirby by the 2.35 p.m. from Hooton." *(See Tables 1 and 2 overleaf).*

GWR '3571' Class 0-4-2T No.3572 is seen at West Kirby on Thursday 15th October 1925. The locomotive has been turned on the small turntable adjacent to the bridge carrying Grange Road over the railway and has paused outside the LNWR signal box prior to rejoining its train. No.3572 was stationed at Birkenhead from 1907 until 1928 when it was withdrawn from service. The signal box was closed in 1932 and removed thereafter. (Rev. A. V. Mace/Transport Treasury)



There were potentially five services, three conditional, from Hooton to West Kirby, the 1.50pm and 2.35pm combining at Parkgate with four services, one conditional, in the reverse direction from West Kirby to Hooton. These were stopping trains. There were three services, one conditional, from Hooton to Parkgate departing at 7.20am (ex-Chester), 7.35am (ex-Birkenhead) and 7.05pm and three, one conditional, in the reverse direction. The former are presumed to have been empty wagon trains from Hooton and the latter presumed to be coal trains departing Parkgate sidings. There were also two trains from Hooton to Heswall at 11.50am and 12.35pm (ex Grange Lane) and two in the reverse direction. These trains were also conditional.

By the time of the railway grouping in

1922 there had been significant changes to the working timetable. A new mineral service had been established linking Hooton with the Birkenhead Docks depot of the Wirral Railway and freight services starting from or terminating at Heswall had been discontinued. The service between Hooton and Birkenhead Docks had been established by 1915.[24]

There were two mineral trains from Hooton to Birkenhead Docks, the first being an early morning departure leaving Hooton at 5.35am, two services from Hooton to West Kirby comprising general goods and two services from Hooton to Parkgate with coal empties. There were two services from Birkenhead Docks to Hooton with coal empties, two services from West Kirby to Hooton with general goods and three services from Parkgate to Hooton with coal from the Wirral Colliery, the final train of the day leaving Parkgate at 11.00pm. *(See Table 3 opposite).*

The colliery at Neston was still producing 60,000 tons of household, manufacturing and steam coal in 1923 but ceased trading in 1927 shortly after the General Strike in 1926.[25] This led to a reduction in services between Hooton and Parkgate but there was still a freight service from Parkgate to Hooton in the 1935 timetable.[26] Parkgate aside, the number and pattern of services 30 years later were very similar to those of 1922 apart from some very obvious changes in times. There was also an extra service betwwen Hooton and Birkenhead Docks (Birkenhead North from May 1926). Coal was being transported to Birkenhead North for local distribution in spite of the electrification of the former Wirral Railway and the closure of the engine shed at Birkenhead North in 1938.

During World War II a Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF No.10, usually referred to as ROFTEN) was established at Hooton and was provided with a rail connection between Hooton South signal box and Hadlow Road station but no evidence of rail traffic can be distinguished from working timetables of the period. The factory was engaged in the manufacture of anti-aircraft guns. At the end of the war, the factory was closed and the site was sold to Williams & Williams of Chester, suppliers of metal window frames and roof glazing. *(See Table 4 opposite).*

A steady reduction in the number of freight services occurred in the mid-1950s with the following services removed from the Winter 1953 timetable: the 12.25pm Hooton to West Kirby and the 3.48pm West Kirby to Hooton. Also, the timing of the 12.16pm SX West Kirby to Chester had been altered so that it now departed West Kirby at 12.05pm, as on the Saturday.

In 1953 on the opening of the Cadbury's chocolate and cake-making factory at Moreton on the route of the former Wirral Railway, a new freight flow was established with trains of empty goods vans running via Hooton and West Kirby. Trains of loaded vans departed the factory using a different route via the Birkenhead and Wallasey Docks.

Further reductions occurred in 1955 with the following services discontinued in the summer timetable: the 9.20am Birkenhead North to Hooton, the 11.15am SO Hooton to Birkenhead North and the 11.53am SX Hooton to Birkenhead North. This left five services remaining: the 4.45am Hooton to Birkenhead North, the 8.30am Hooton to West Kirby; the 12.05pm West Kirby to Chester; the 1.45pm SX Hooton to Birkenhead North and the 7.10pm Birkenhead North departing West Kirby at 7.37pm to Hooton, the latter two running only as required.[27]

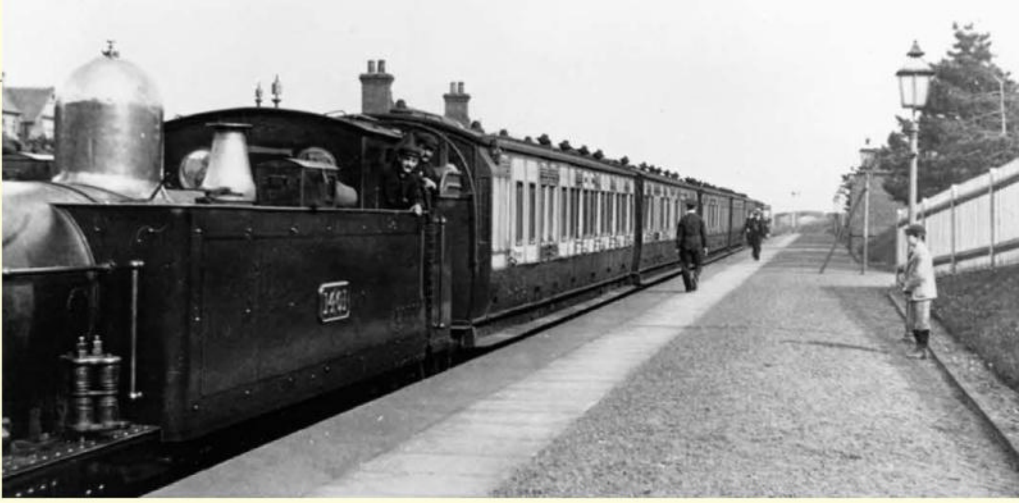
The following retimings occurred in the period 1956 to 1960: the 12.05pm West Kirby to Chester became the 11.55am (summer timetable 1956), the 8.30am Hooton to West Kirby became the 7.25am and the 11.55am West Kirby to Chester became the 10.00am (summer 1957); the 7.25am Hooton to West Kirby became the 7.25am Hooton to Hoylake, the 1.45pm Hooton to Birkenhead North became the 10.15am Hooton to Birkenhead North and the 10.00am West Kirby to Chester became the 9.40am Hoylake to Chester (summer 1959); the 4.45am Hooton to Birkenhead North became the 4.40am in the 1959 Summer timetable and then the 4.30am Hooton to Bidston Yard via Birkenhead North in the 1960 summer timetable. The 7.10pm Birkenhead North to Hooton service had been discontinued by 1959.

By the summer of 1961 the only freight services remaining were: the 4.30am Hooton to Bidston Yard, the 7.25am Hooton to Hoylake, the 9.40am Hoylake to Chester and the 10.15am Hooton to Bidston Yard.[28]

The last freight trains ran on Saturday 5th May 1962 and freight services were officially withdrawn on 7th May that year.

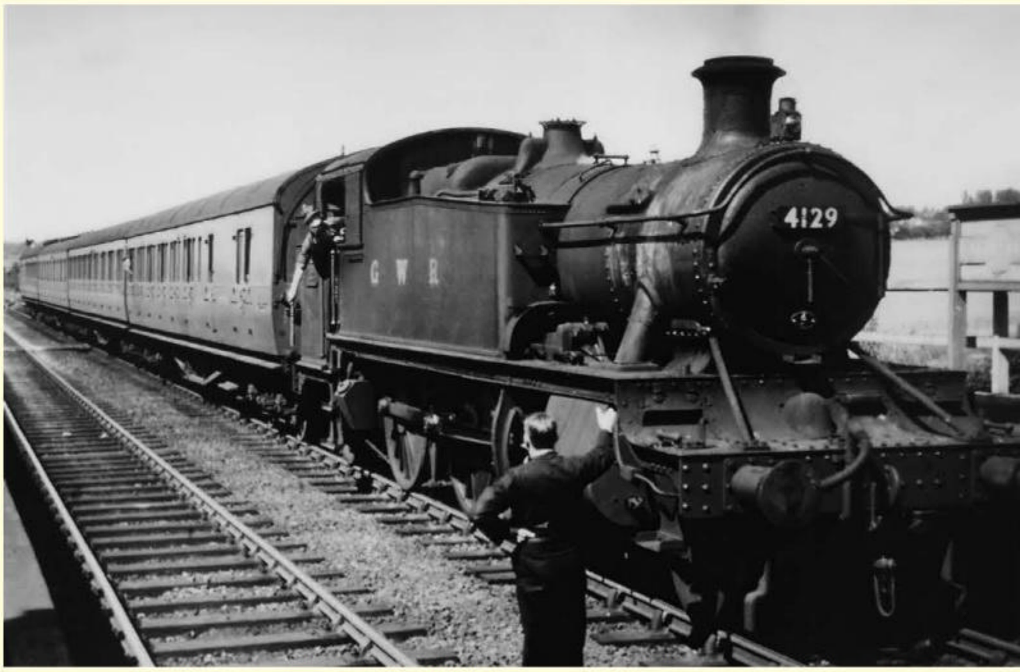
Motive power

Knowledge of the types of locomotive used on the line in the twentieth century is reasonably well documented in both photographic and written record but the period before 1900 is more a matter of conjecture. The engine sheds mainly responsible for the supply of motive power were the Birkenhead Joint shed



GWR 2-4-0T 'Metro' No.1401 has stopped at Thurstaston with a train of LNWR non-corridor stock bound for West Kirby c1910. No.1401 was based at Birkenhead for almost ten years, coming north from Slough in November 1908 before being re-allocated to Leamington in January 1918. The locomotive was originally employed on the Metropolitan Railway before the electrification of that railway caused the redistribution of its class. (Jim Peden/John Ryan Collection)

The photographer has captured ex-GWR '51XX' 2-6-2T No.4129 arriving at Parkgate station in August 1954 with a train composed of GWR stock bound for Hooton. The fireman is about to surrender the token for the single line section between Heswall and Parkgate prior to receiving the token for the section between Parkgate and Hadlow Road. The locomotive had a 'heavy general' at Swindon Works in 1951 and proudly displays its Great Western heritage. (Author's Collection)



at Grange Lane (Mollington Street from 1879), its sub shed at Hooton and the Great Western Railway shed at Chester.

The GWR was perhaps better placed than the LNWR in October 1866 to provide motive power as it had inherited two 2-4-0Ts, Nos. 97 and 98 and two 0-4-0STs from the erstwhile Birkenhead Railway. The 2-4-0Ts had 5ft 3in driving wheels and were suitable for passenger work while the 0-4-0STs had 4ft driving wheels and were more suited to shunting and freight work. Also, the Northern Division of the GWR had commenced the building of its own range of 0-6-0STs (Classes 302 and 1016) suitable for freight and mixed traffic work and 2-4-0Ts suitable for passenger work at its Wolverhampton Works in 1864. The motive power hauling the very first train on the branch was a Great Western 0-6-0T. In March 1867 it was agreed that the GWR and the LNWR would both work the line for alternate periods of one year.[29]

The 1901 GWR locomotive register informs us that the following locomotive classes were represented on the Wirral by that time: the '517' 0-4-2T, the '645' 0-6-0ST and the '571' 0-4-2T.[30] Construction of the '517' Class had commenced in 1868, of the '645/1501' Class in 1872 and of the '3571' Class in 1895. It would be a reasonable assumption that examples of these classes were used on the branch before 1901.

The GWR successively loaned various 0-4-0STs to the Wirral Colliery Company in 1902 and 1903 while the Colliery's own locomotive was under repair, lending No.92 between May 1902 and July 1902, No.342 between July 1902 and September 1902, and No.95 between September 1902 and February

Table 1: Extract from the LNWR Working Timetable for February 1906

		am	am	am	am	am	pm	pm	pm	pm	pm
		C			C	C		C	C	C	C
Hooton	dep.	7.00	7.20*	7.35**	9.42	11.50	12.00	12.35**	1.50	2.35	7.05
Parkgate	arr.	7.20	7.35	7.50	9.57		12.30		2.20	3.00	7.20
Parkgate	dep.	7.25			10.10	12.06	12.50	12.51	3.05	3.05	
Heswall	arr.	7.30				12.12	12.55	12.57	3.15	3.15	
Heswall	dep.	7.35			10.15		1.05		3.25	3.25	
West Kirby	arr.	8.13			10.30		1.25		3.55	3.55	

*C = Conditional. * Ex-Chester. **Ex-Birkenhead Grange Lane.*

Table 2: Extract from the LNWR Working Timetable for February 1906

		am	am	am	am	pm	pm	pm	pm	pm
			C			C	C			C
West Kirby	dep.		8.43		11.05			2.20	5.25	
Heswall	arr.							2.40	5.40	
Heswall	dep.		8.55		11.17	12.40	1.25	3.30	5.45	
Parkgate	arr.		9.00					3.35	5.50	
Parkgate	dep.	8.30	9.20	9.40	11.22	12.45	1.30	4.25	6.30	7.44
Hooton	arr.	8.45	9.46	9.55	11.35	12.58	1.43	5.00	6.50	8.03

C = Conditional.

Table 3: Freight services – Monday to Saturday
Hooton to West Kirby branch 2nd October 1922 until further notice

Origin	Departure	Destination	Arrival
Hooton	5.35am	Birkenhead Docks	6.15am*
Hooton	7.00am	West Kirby	10.00am
Hooton	10.15am	Parkgate	10.30am
Parkgate	11.05am	Hooton	11.40am
West Kirby	11.45am	Hooton	1.30pm
Hooton	12.07pm	Birkenhead Docks	12.50pm*
Hooton	12.15pm	West Kirby	2.40pm
Birkenhead Docks	3.30pm*	Hooton	4.26pm
West Kirby	3.40pm	Hooton	6.30pm
Hooton	7.40pm	Parkgate	8.05pm
Birkenhead Docks	8.45pm*	Hooton	10.17pm
Parkgate	9.15pm	Hooton	9.30pm
Parkgate	11.00pm	Hooton	11.15pm

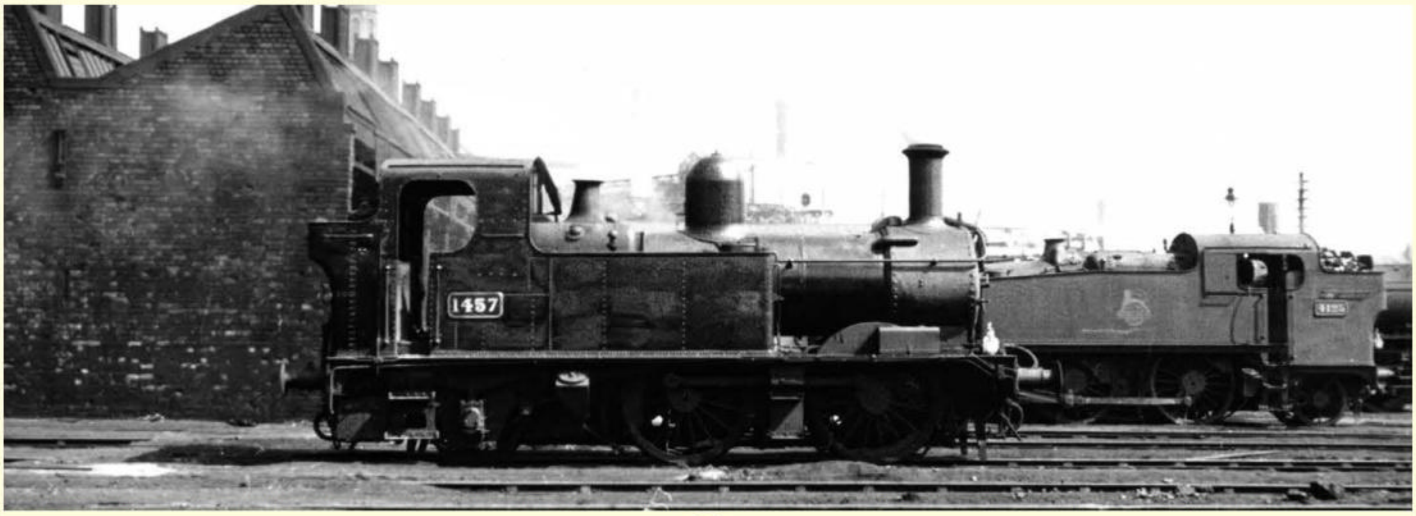
Source: LNWR working timetable * Time at West Kirby.

Table 4: Freight services – weekdays
Hooton to West Kirby branch 8th June to 20th September 1953

Origin	Departure	Destination	Arrival
Hooton	4.45am	Birkenhead North	5.49am
Hooton	8.30am	West Kirby	10.39am
Birkenhead North	9.20am	Hooton	10.18am
Hooton	11.15am SO 11.53am SX	Birkenhead North	1.56pm
Hooton	12.25pm	West Kirby	2.35pm
West Kirby	12.05pm SO 12.16pm SX	Chester Brook Lane	3.40pm
Hooton	1.45pm SX Q	Birkenhead North	3.30pm
West Kirby	3.48pm	Hooton	5.30pm
Birkenhead North	7.10pm Q	Hooton	8.27pm

Source: BR LMR Western Division working timetable Sections H and J.

Former GWR '14XX' 0-4-2T No.1457 is seen resting between duties at Birkenhead shed on Tuesday 20th April 1954, having worked the 7.14am motor train from West Kirby to Birkenhead Woodside. Its next duty was to work the 2.20pm service from Birkenhead Woodside to West Kirby. The locomotive was transferred from Croes Newydd to Birkenhead in February 1949 as part of a swap arrangement involving a '64XX' 0-6-0PT. No.1457 had been overhauled at Stafford Road Works in 1950 and in April 1954 its heritage was beginning to show through the faded paintwork on the side tank. (Henry Casserley/Manchester Locomotive Society)



1903.[31] No.95 was an ex-Birkenhead Railway engine acquired by the GWR in 1860 but which had since undergone several rebuilds.

The Northern Division of the LNWR had its own solution to the supply of motive power as in 1858 it had embarked on the conversion of several types of tender engine to tank engine. These included the 2-4-0 'Small Firebox (SFB) Curved Frame Goods', the 2-4-0 'SFB Straight Frame Goods' and the 2-4-0 'SFB Direct Action Goods'. These engines had 5ft driving wheels and were well suited to passenger work.[32] The LNWR also had available various Ramsbottom designs including an 0-4-0ST dating from 1863 and the 0-6-0ST ('Special Tank') constructed from 1870 onwards for freight work.

There were other LNW types which might have been seen on the branch in the late nineteenth century including a new class of 2-4-0T dating from 1876, two types of 2-4-2T, with driving wheels of 4ft 6in and 5ft 6in respectively and the 0-6-2T 'Coal Tanks' for freight work. Construction of the 4ft 6in type of 2-4-2T had commenced in 1879 and of the 5ft 6in type in 1890. Construction of the 0-6-2T 'Coal Tanks' had commenced in 1881.

On the opening of the extension to West Kirby in 1886, it became a requirement that engines should be turned on the turntable at West Kirby in order that the engines should face smokebox first on return journeys. However, it would have been a tight squeeze for the 5ft 6in 2-4-2Ts on the small turntable. The first known allocation of LNW engines at Birkenhead in December 1912 included 2-4-2Ts of the 5ft 6in type, the 0-6-2T 'Coal Tanks' and 0-6-0STs of both 'Special Tank' and 'Coal Saddle' classes.

R. S. McNaught in his journey around the Wirral in 1913 noted the presence of GWR 'Metro' tank No.1495 at the head of a set of LNW carriages at Birkenhead Woodside with a train for West Kirby and a LNW 2-4-2T of the 5ft 6in type No.1768 with a train of GWR carriages on an incoming train from West Kirby. His journey by train to West Kirby paused at Heswall to allow GWR 0-6-0ST '645' Class No.656 to pass with a short goods train. GWR 'Metro' tanks first appeared on the Wirral in 1907 following the electrification of the London Metropolitan Railway.[33]

It was not until the 1930s that newer types of locomotive appeared on the branch line. The joint GWR & LMS supplement to the Sectional Appendix of March 1937 confirms that only tank engines were to be employed on the branch. Permitted classes of LMS engines included Fowler and Stanier 2-6-2Ts, Stanier 0-4-4Ts for passenger work and Class 3 0-6-0Ts for freight work. However, a photograph has emerged of ex-LNW 2-4-2T No.6650 at Heswall on 20th April 1938, in the process of running around an afternoon passenger service from Hooton. Permitted classes of GWR engines in 1937 included 'Metro' 2-4-0Ts and various types of 0-6-0PTs, 0-6-2Ts, and 2-6-2Ts. The use of more modern classes rendered the turntable at West Kirby obsolete by virtue of its size and the turntable was removed in 1942.[34]

During World War II tender engines were permitted on the branch and the LMS types involved are identified in the British Railways LMR & WR Supplement to the Sectional Appendix dated January 1949. These included ex-LMS Class 2 4-4-0s, ex-LNW 0-8-0s and various types of 0-6-0. However, the tender engines could only to be used on through trains to and from the Wirral section, working chimney first. The main motive power used on branch at this time were the GWR '51XX' 2-6-2Ts and LMS Stanier 2-6-2Ts on passenger work, the GWR '57XX' 0-6-0PTs on passenger and freight duty and the LMS Class 3F 0-6-0Ts on freight work. These were joined by two GWR '14XX' 0-4-2Ts, Nos.1417 and 1457 on the introduction of motor trains in 1951.

In May 1956 the ex GWR auto trailer in use, No.W212, was condemned and the '14XX' engines at Birkenhead were placed in store on 3rd June 1956.[35] Passenger services on the branch ceased in September 1956 and in the few remaining months of service Ivatt 2MT 2-6-2Ts and Standard Class 2MT 2-6-2Ts were employed on push-pull work. The occasional LMS 2-6-4T would also put in an appearance.

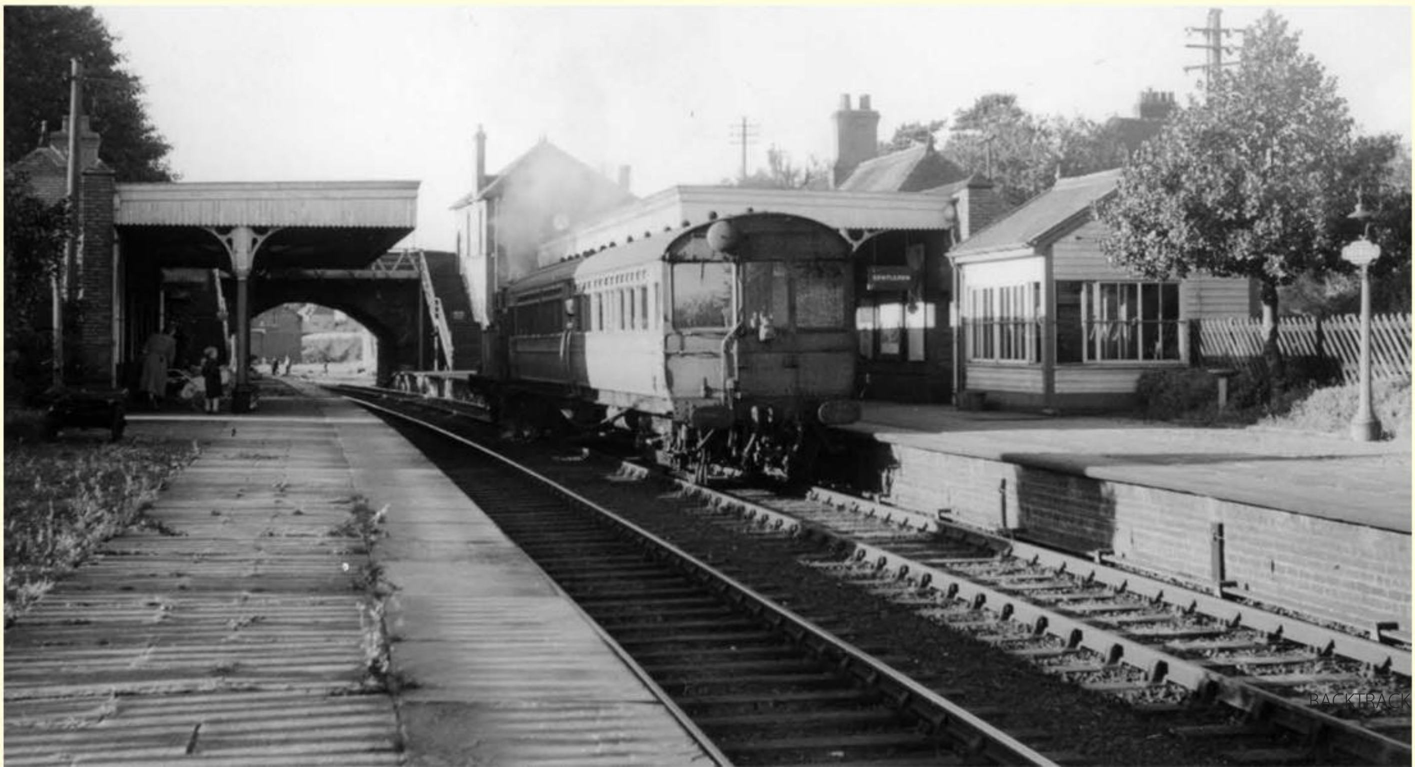
Freight services continued to be worked by ex-LMS 0-6-0Ts and ex-GWR 0-6-0PTs after 1956 but in the late 1950s a variety of tender engines began to be employed on the daily services. Stanier 'Black Fives', 2-6-0s and 2-8-0s and Hughes 2-6-0s were regularly employed.[36] Rarities included ex-LMS 0-6-0s.

Maurice Harrison noted the use of ex-LMS 'Jubilee' No.45741 *Leinster* from Carlisle Upperby at Hoylake on the 7.25am pick-up goods from Hooton on 24th January 1960 and again on 28th January 1960. At the time there were regular freight services connecting Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port with Carlisle. One may deduce that the engine was borrowed to work the pick-up goods while awaiting return to Carlisle. The 7.25am pick-up goods was scheduled to stop at Neston South, Parkgate and Heswall on the outward journey, and at Kirby Park on the return 9.40am Hoylake to Hooton journey.

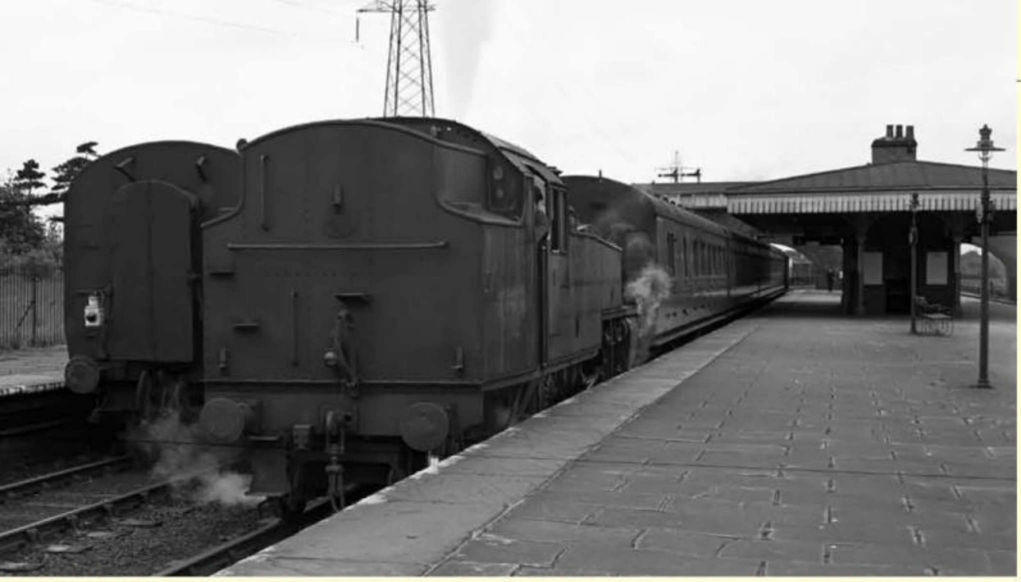
The only accident involving locomotives at work on the branch happened at 6.15am on Monday 25th February 1957 at Thurstaston when BR Standard 2MT 2-6-2T No.84003 ran into ex LMSR Class 3F 0-6-0T No. 47627. The accident resulted in minor damage to the locomotives, the rolling stock and the down platform face. The exact cause of the accident is unknown but it was usual for either an Ivatt 2-6-2T or a Standard Class 2-6-2T to accompany an LMS 0-6-0T on the 4.45am freight from Hooton to Birkenhead North at this time.[37]

Intervention by Cheshire County Council

Lifting of the track began in February 1964 from the direction of West Kirby with the motive power provided by Hughes-designed 2-6-0s and Stanier-designed 2-8-0s from Birkenhead shed. Following public pressure



It is the final year of passenger working and the branch motor train with the auto trailer leading has stopped at Heswall station on its return journey from West Kirby to Birkenhead Woodside. The locomotive hidden by the trailer would have been an ex-GWR '14XX' 0-4-2T. The auto trailer W212 was withdrawn from service in May 1956 and has since been converted back into its original form as a Steam Railmotor at the Didcot Railway Centre. (W. A. Camwell/Stephenson Locomotive Society)



Ex-LMS Stanier 2-6-2T No.40088 is pictured at Hooton station Platform 6, prior to making a late afternoon departure to West Kirby on Saturday 10th July 1954. The former LMS Stanier 2-6-2Ts and the former GWR Collett '51XX' 2-6-2Ts were the main motive power employed on passenger services on the branch after nationalisation. No.40088 was based at Birkenhead for a short period only from November 1952 until February 1955. (Alan Gilbert/Manchester Locomotive Society)

the track bed was purchased by Cheshire County Council, with assistance from the Countryside Commission, in 1968 and the route reopened in 1973 as the Wirral Way, part of the Wirral Country Park. The Wirral Way from West Kirby to Gayton (just south of Heswall) is now managed by the Wirral Borough Council and from Gayton to Hooton is managed by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council.

Little remains of the former railway infrastructure save for the preserved railway station at Hadlow Road. The platform edges at Hooton (Platforms 6 and 7) and at Thurstaston are extant as is the nineteenth century waiting room (boarded up, of course) on Platform 7 at Hooton. The site of the former West Kirby Joint station has been redeveloped. All traces of the stations at Kirby Park and Caldy have been obliterated. The former station sites at Heswall and Neston are now occupied by residential development and there are car parks on former railway land at Thurstaston, Parkgate and Hadlow Road.

The station at Hadlow Road has been retained in the style of the 1950s and is entire in its buildings apart from the replacement signal box which came from Hassall Green on the North Staffordshire Railway. Access to the Wirral Way at Hooton is from the B5133 Hooton Road and you start your journey by walking (or cycling) the length of the former Platform 7 (now a muddy path). Access at West Kirby is from the A540 Grange Road. There are also many other access points along the route for dog walkers, ramblers, cyclists and horse-riders. There is also a visitor centre at Thurstaston. The former Wirral Railway station at West Kirby, the former Great Central station at Neston and the former Birkenhead Joint station at Hooton remain open for rail traffic.

Acknowledgements

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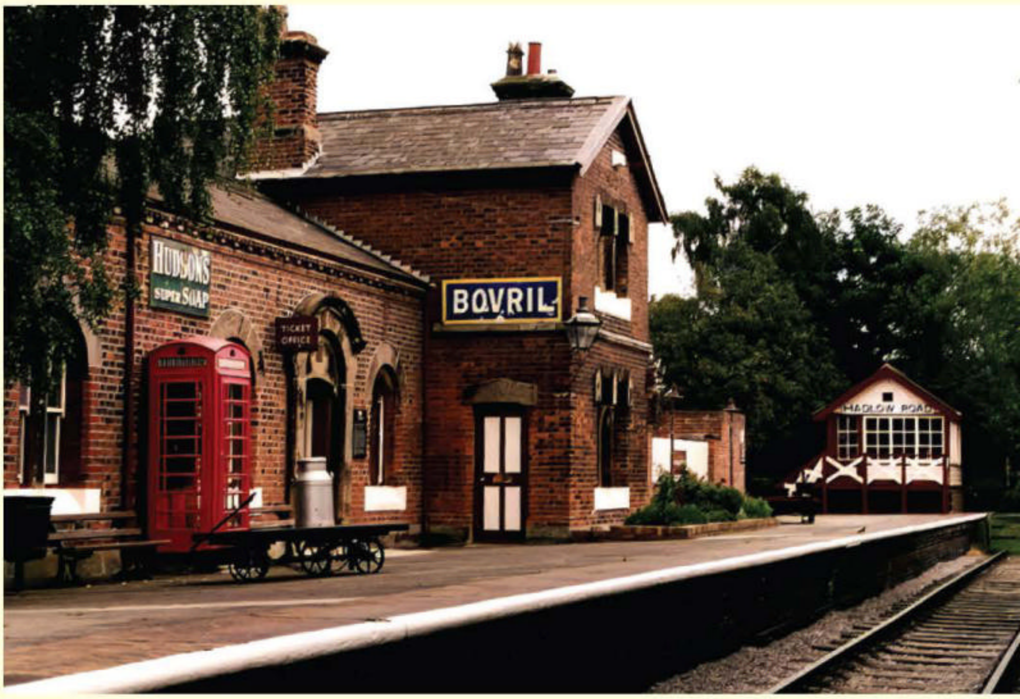
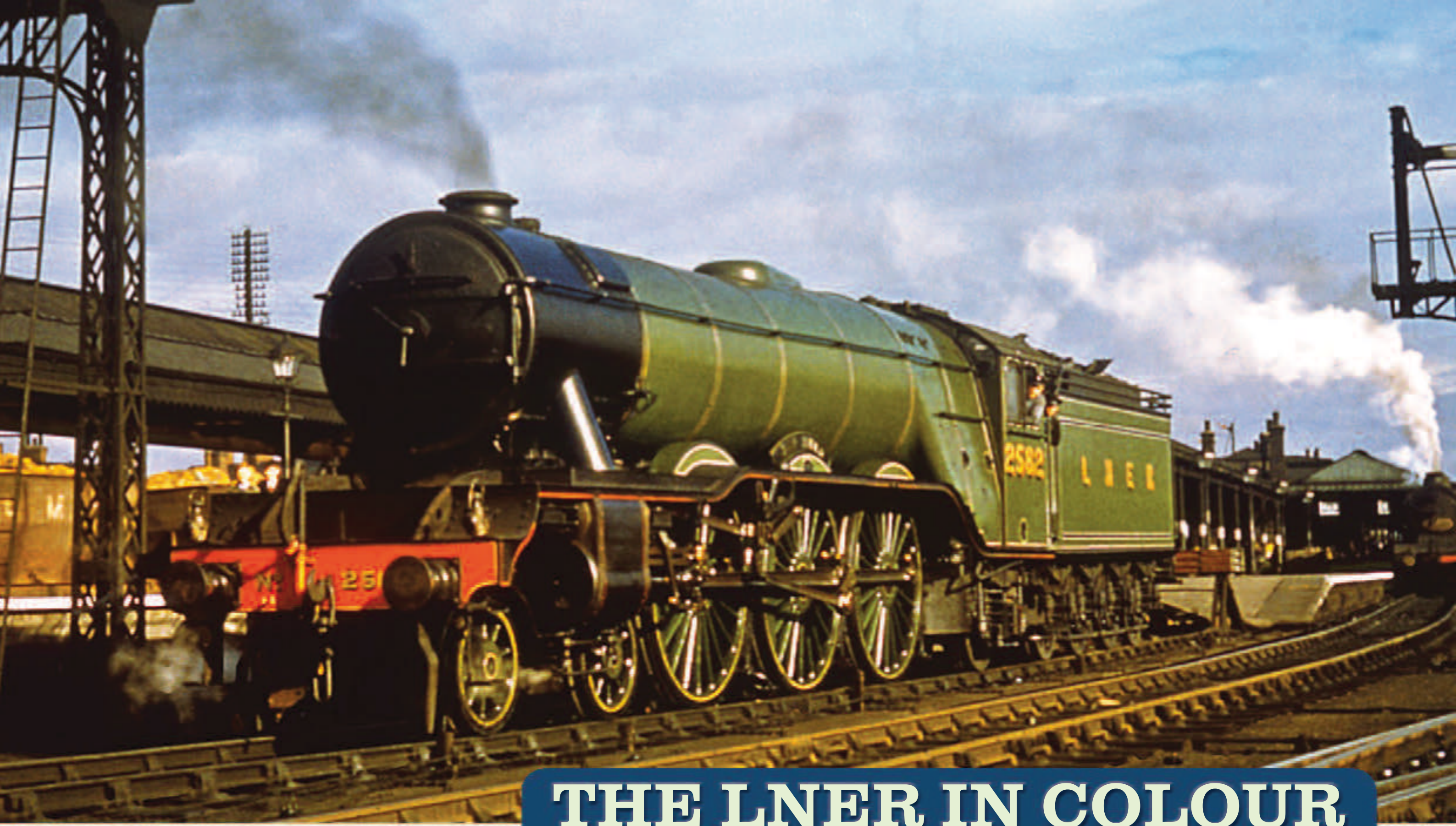
Hadlow Road station was opened for traffic on 1st October 1866. The last passenger train ran on 15th September 1956 and the last freight train ran on 5th May 1962. The station buildings were saved from demolition and have been restored although the signal box is not original. The station café is a popular stopping-off point for refreshment by visitors using the Wirral Way. (E. M Johnson Collection)



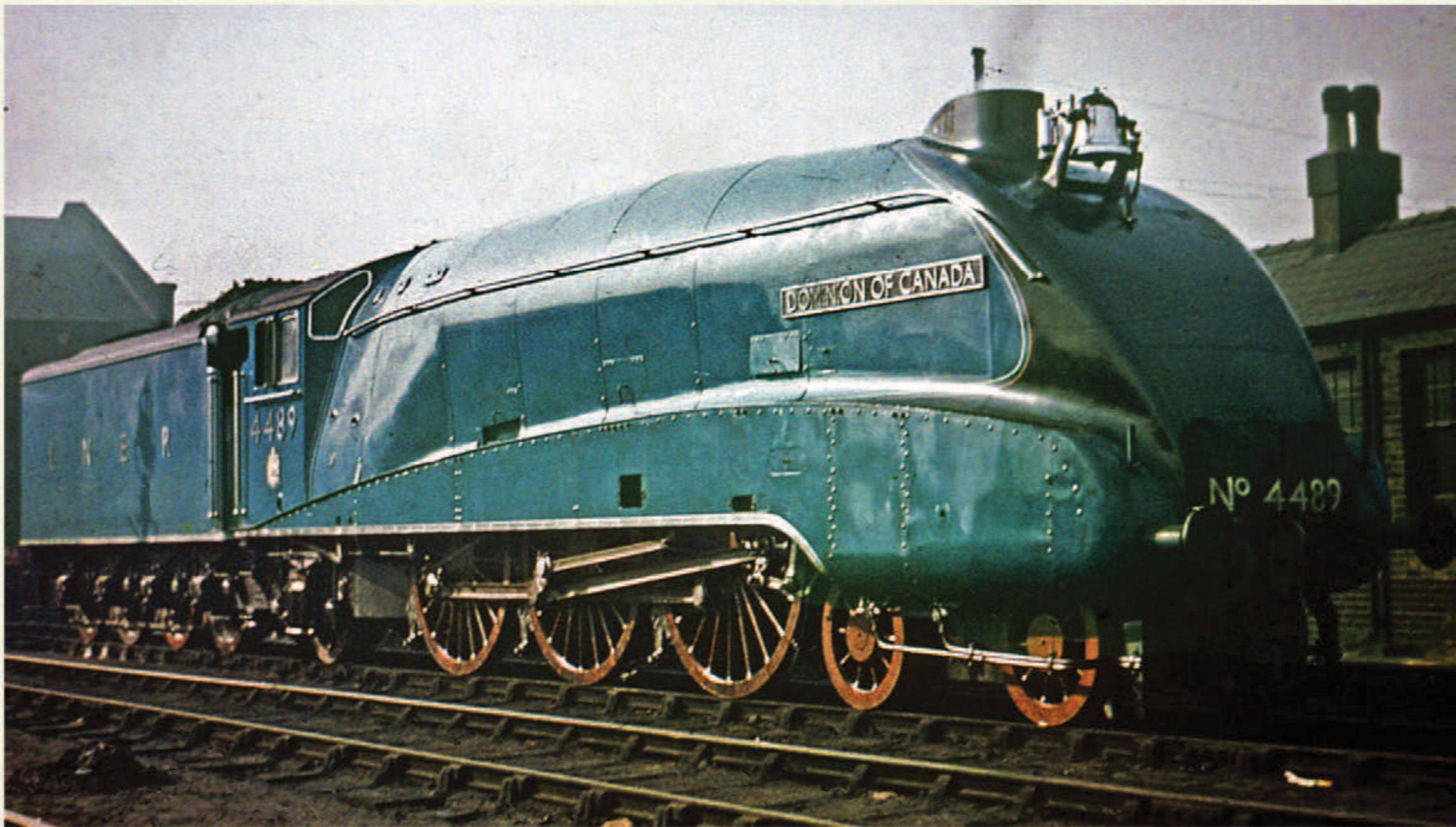


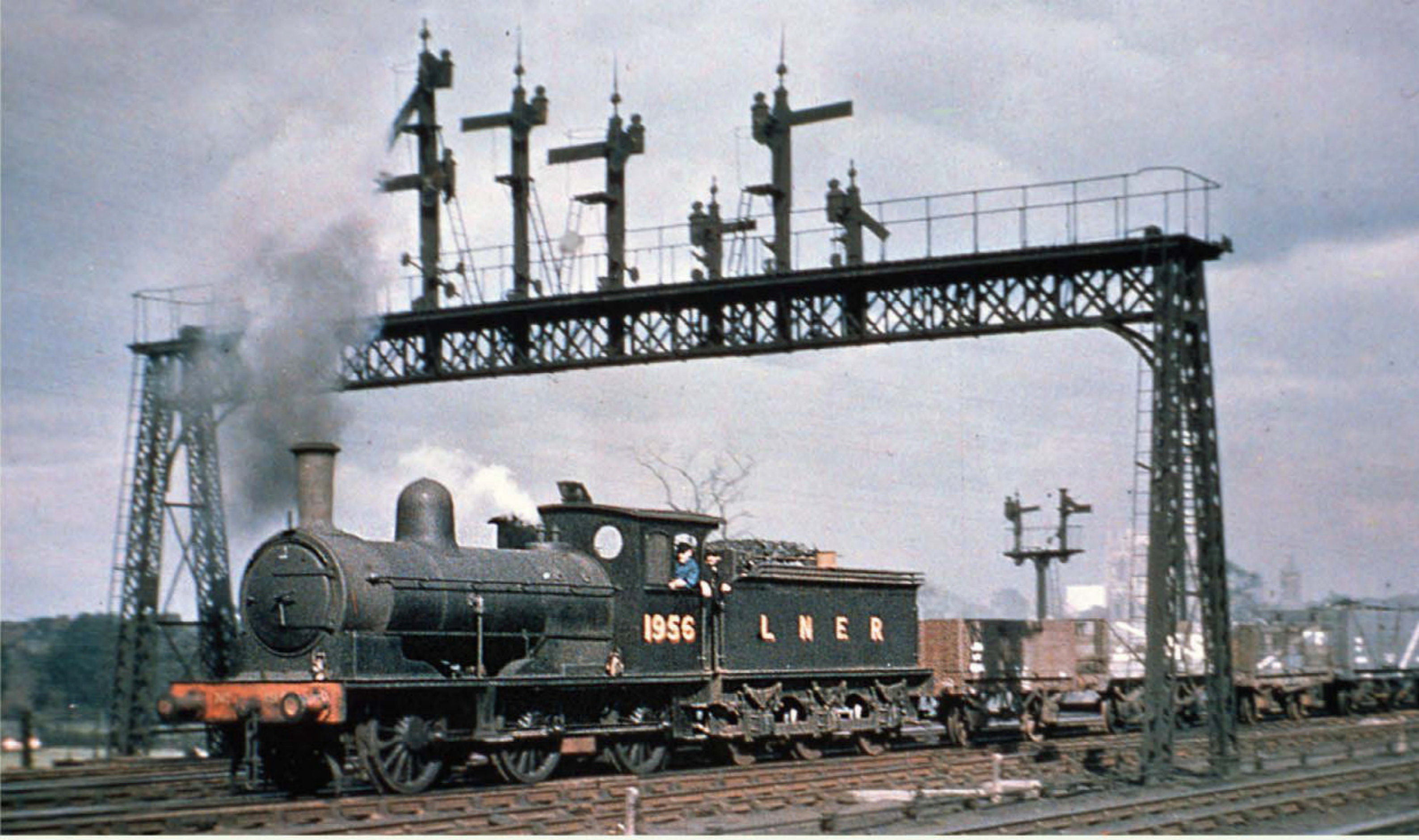
THE LNER IN COLOUR

The London & North Eastern Railway, if not the wealthiest if the 'Big Four', was arguably the most colourful with its apple green livery for its passenger locomotives and garter blue for its streamliners, then later with its desire after the drab wartime years to return to these colours as widely as possible. Here is a flavour of it seen through some landmark photography in the **COLOUR-RAIL** Collection.

ABOVE: **This stunning photograph has previously adorned our front cover – though nearly 28 years ago, so it is well due for a reprise. Waiting in the engine bay at Grantham in August 1946 is A3 4-6-2 No.2582 *Sir Hugo* newly out of the works after overhaul and a repaint in the bright apple green livery. It was the first of the class to be given the post-war green repaint and kept its original number, applied in the shaded lettering. As we shall see, the new style of lettering was to be in yellow Gill Sans. *Sir Hugo* has been restored with its original number but within only a couple of months it became No.83 in the LNER's complete renumbering scheme. This photograph could therefore only have been taken within a very short period of time!**
(C. C. B. Herbert/NRM/Colour-Rail NE87)

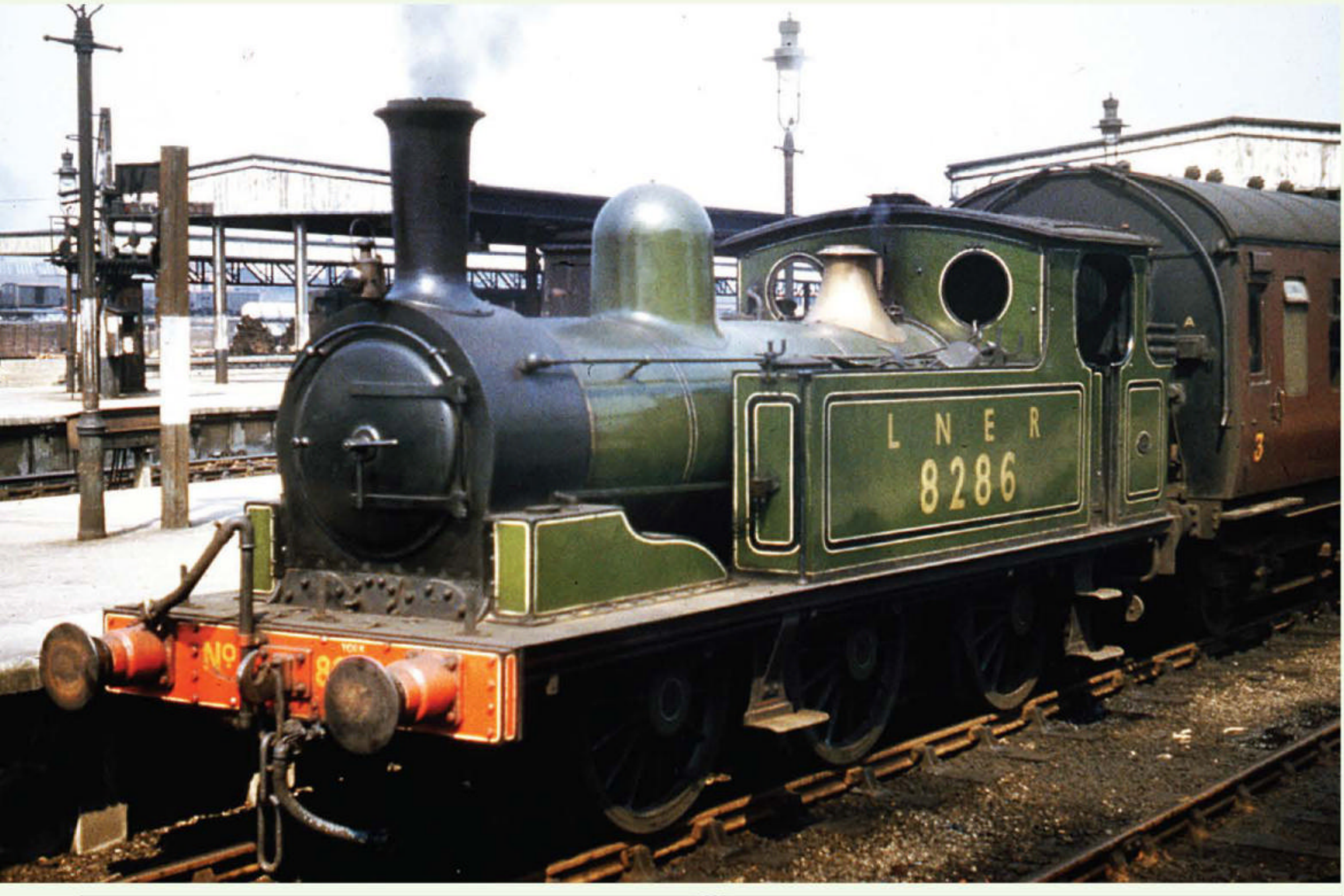
BELOW: **The appearance in 1935 of the streamlined A4 Pacifics must have caused quite a sensation at the time. After the first four silver-grey ones for the 'Silver Jubilee' train, there came an unsatisfactory dalliance with apple green before the LNER settled on its renowned garter blue for the A4 Class, with red wheels, represented by No.4489 *Dominion of Canada* outside Doncaster Works paintshop in March 1938. It had just been fitted with the bell presented by the Canadian Pacific Railway, while the plaque on the cabside carries the coat-of-arms of Canada. The stainless steel figures were applied to the five new engines required for the 'Coronation' service introduced in 1937.**
(Friends of the NRM/Colour-Rail.com NE148)

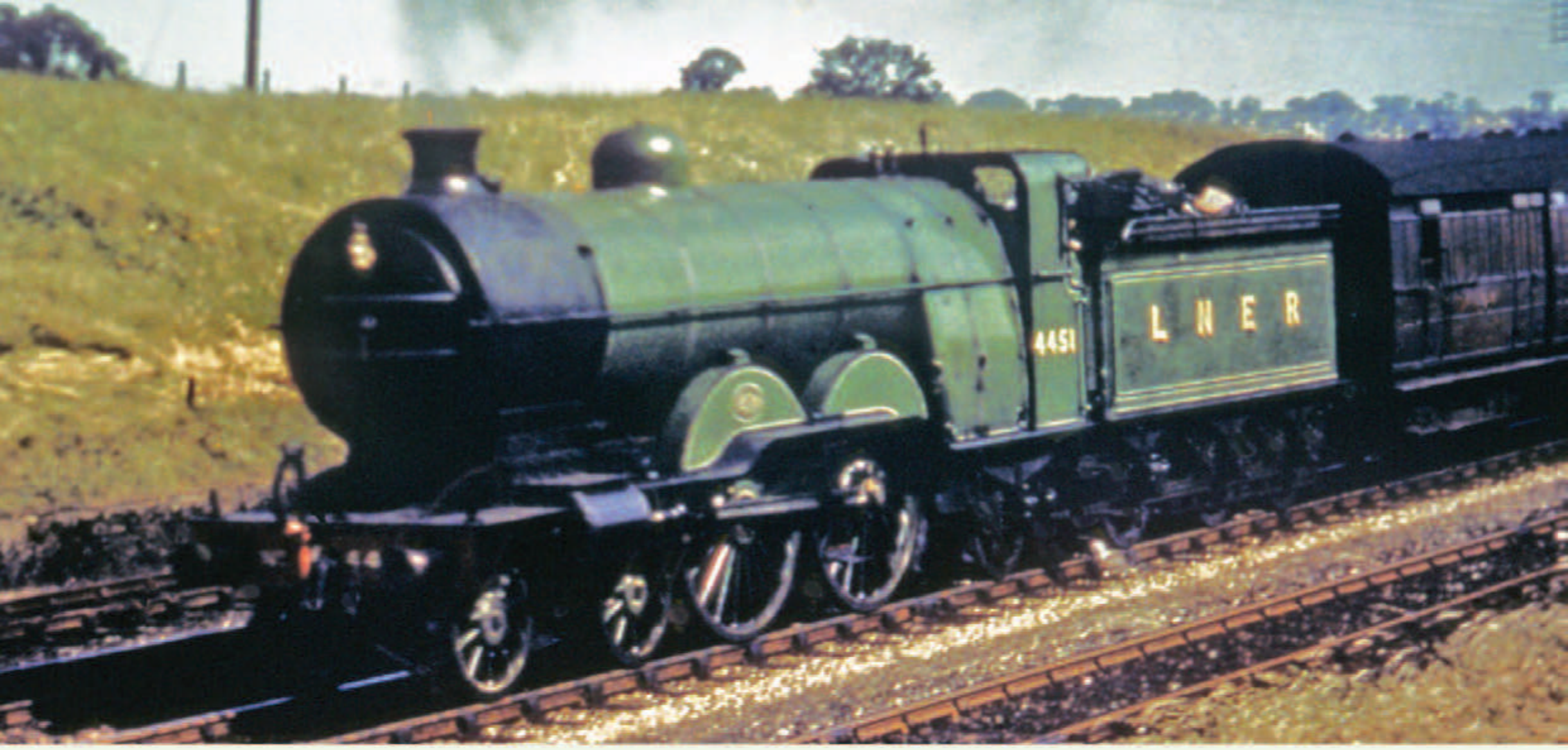




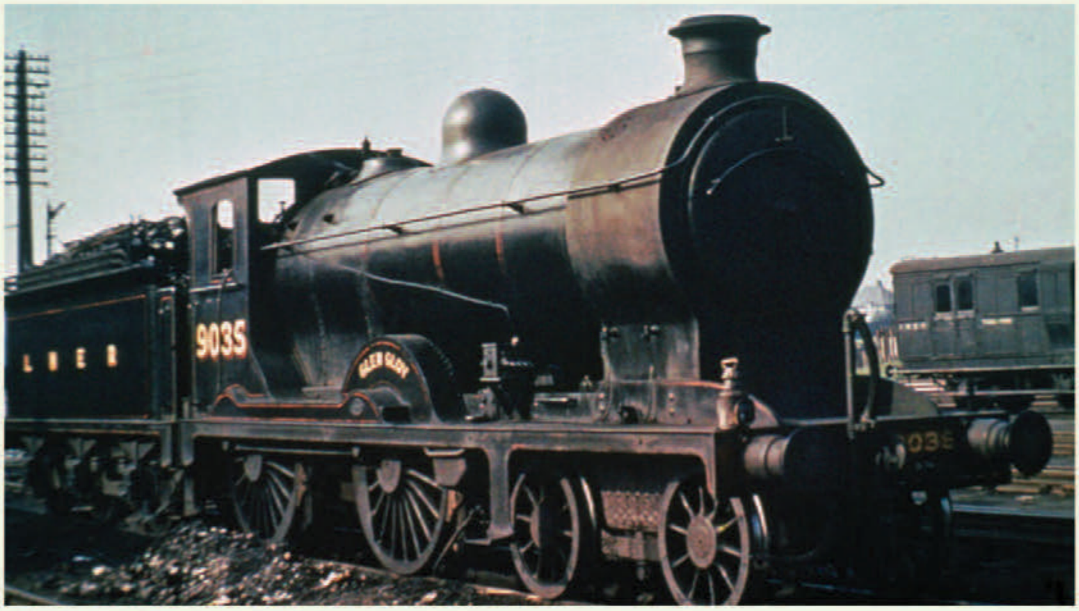
ABOVE: **The LNER made do with a lot of its inherited goods engines of suitable and durable designs such as the North Eastern Railway's P Class 0-6-0s – LNER J24 – which appeared in 1894. No.1956 is on a local freight at Clifton, to the north of York, in August 1938, passing under a smoke-blackened NER signal gantry, with the colour of the arms hard to distinguish. However, the distant grandeur of York Minster can just be discerned inside the right-hand gantry supports.** (Colour-Rail.com NE20)

BELOW: **The LNER was enthusiastic about returning locomotives to apple green after the war and it was not just express and mixed traffic classes which were so treated; in May 1947 ex-North Eastern J71 0-6-0T No.8286 was given this special finish in view of its role as York station pilot. Three months later, with the new style of yellow Gill Sans lettering and a polished brass safety valve bonnet, it is seen shunting an LMS carriage in one of York's south end bay platforms.** (H. N. James/Colour-Rail.com NE21)



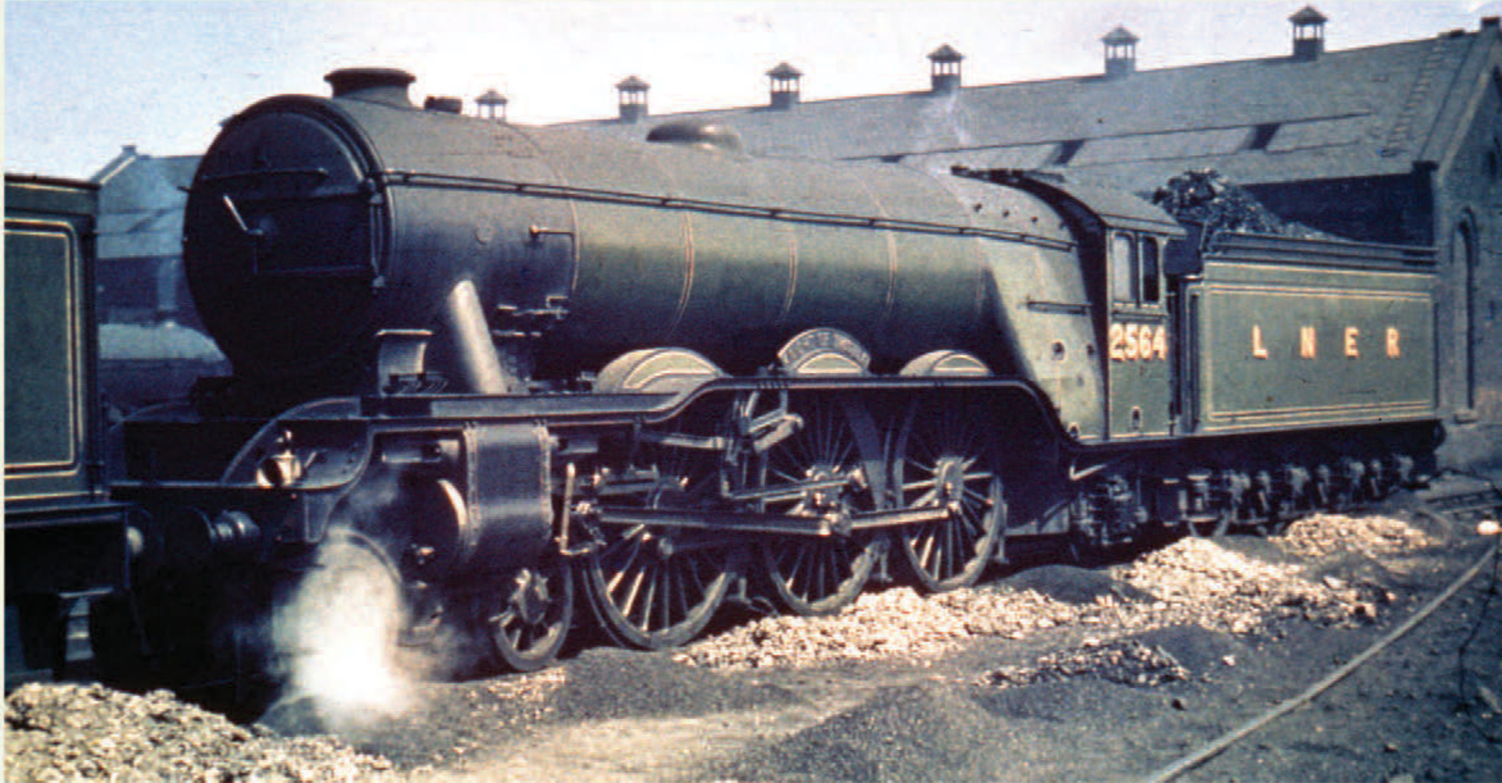


ABOVE: **The LNER inherited sizeable stocks of motive power from its constituents and the Great Northern Railways's top locomotives were its large Atlantics of Class C1. Though in apple green No.4451 had by 1937 been downgraded to local service with Quad-Art stock on a train from King's Cross near Brookmans Park.** (Kenneth Leech/Colour-Rail.com NE62)

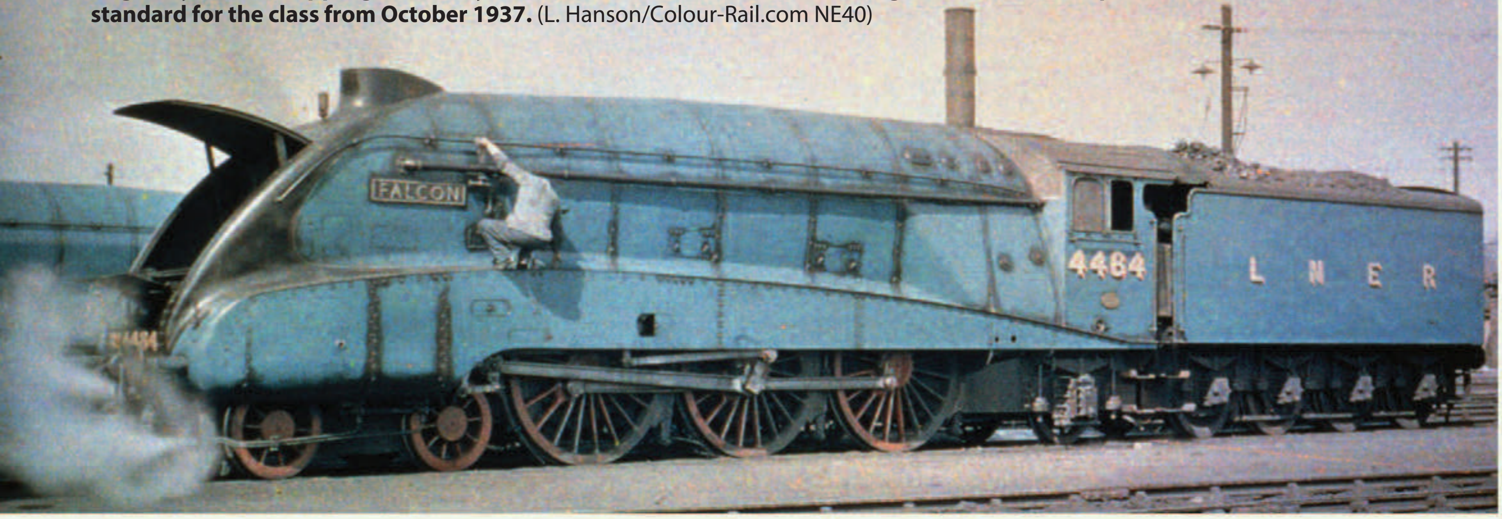


LEFT: **Lined black was the finish for many of the 'intermediate' range of passenger engines such as North British Railway D34 4-4-0 No.9035 *Glen Gloy* seen at Eastfield shed, Glasgow, in August 1939.** (Colour-Rail.com NE17)

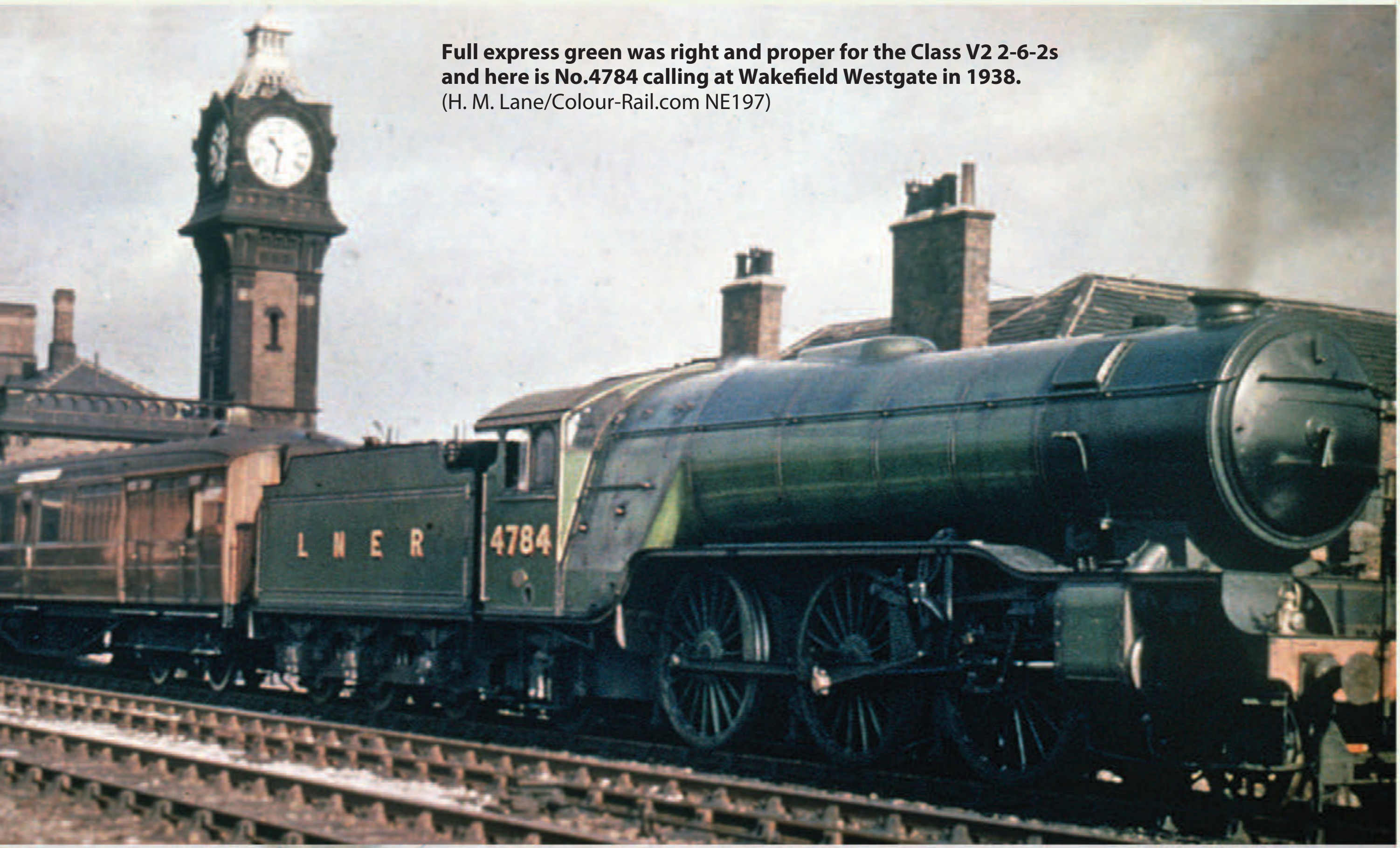
BELOW: **In August 1937 A1 Pacific No.2564 *Knight of Thistle* stands on the ash pits at Edinburgh Haymarket depot. It was not rebuilt as an A3 until 1947, one of the last to be dealt with. Its original name was *Knight of* the *Thistle* until 1932 when *'the'* was dropped – but the original was in fact correct.** (L. Hanson/Colour-Rail.com NE39)



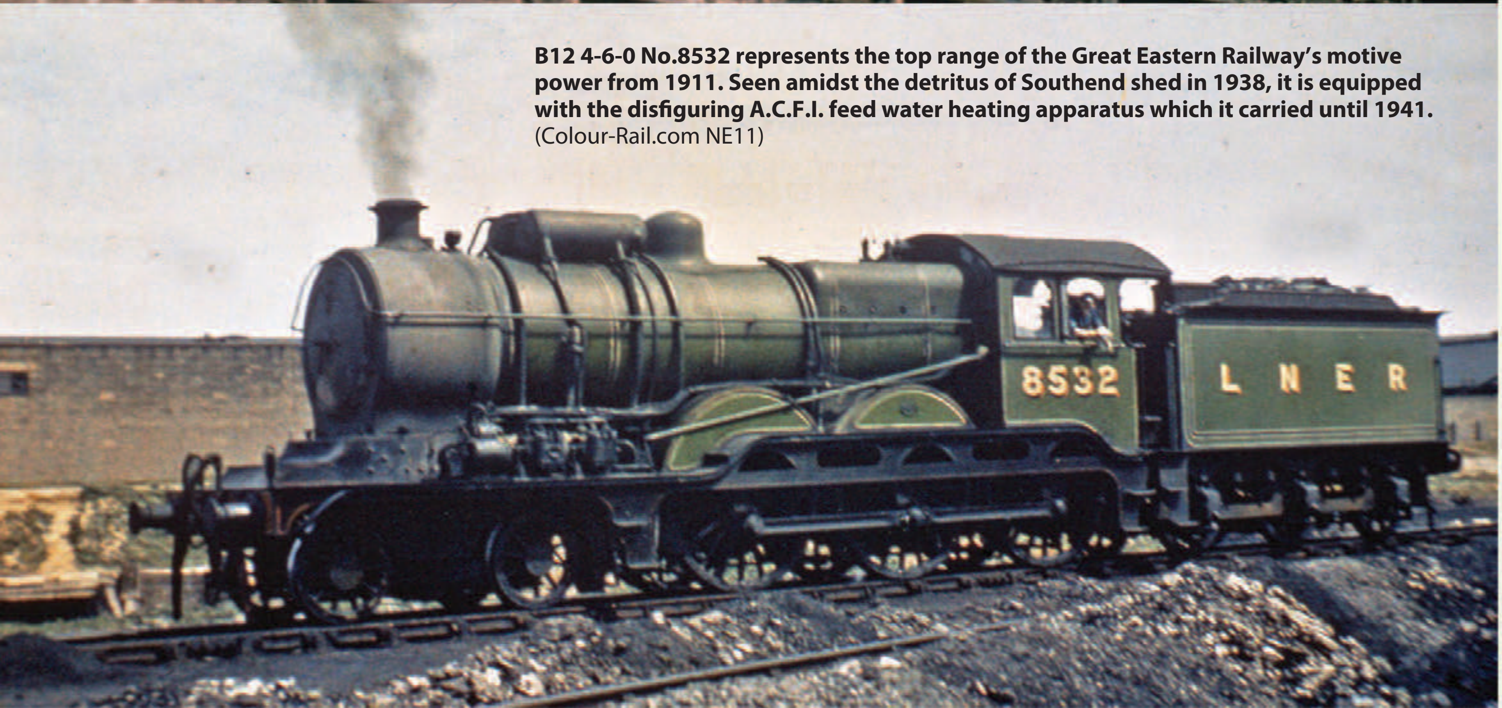
With its 'cod's mouth' open for access to the smokebox door, A4 No.4484 *Falcon* undergoes shed servicing at Haymarket in August 1938. Following the success of the first streamliners, this was one the 'general service' A4s built in 1936/7 and originally received apple green livery. That did not become them at all and garter blue was adopted as the standard for the class from October 1937. (L. Hanson/Colour-Rail.com NE40)



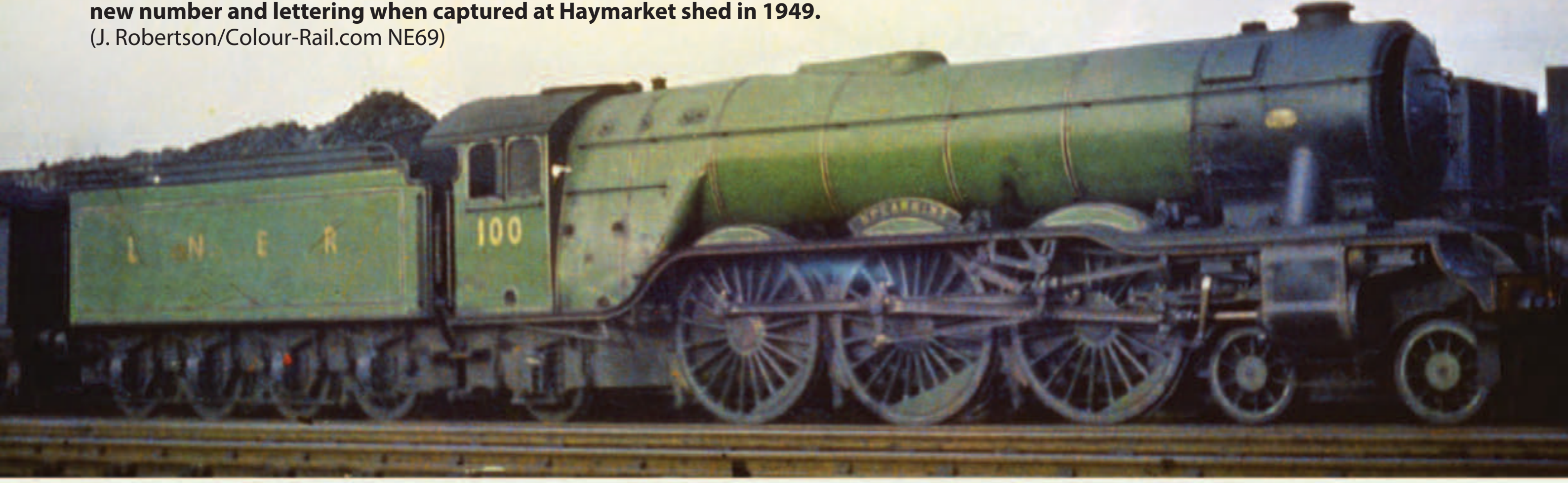
Full express green was right and proper for the Class V2 2-6-2s and here is No.4784 calling at Wakefield Westgate in 1938. (H. M. Lane/Colour-Rail.com NE197)

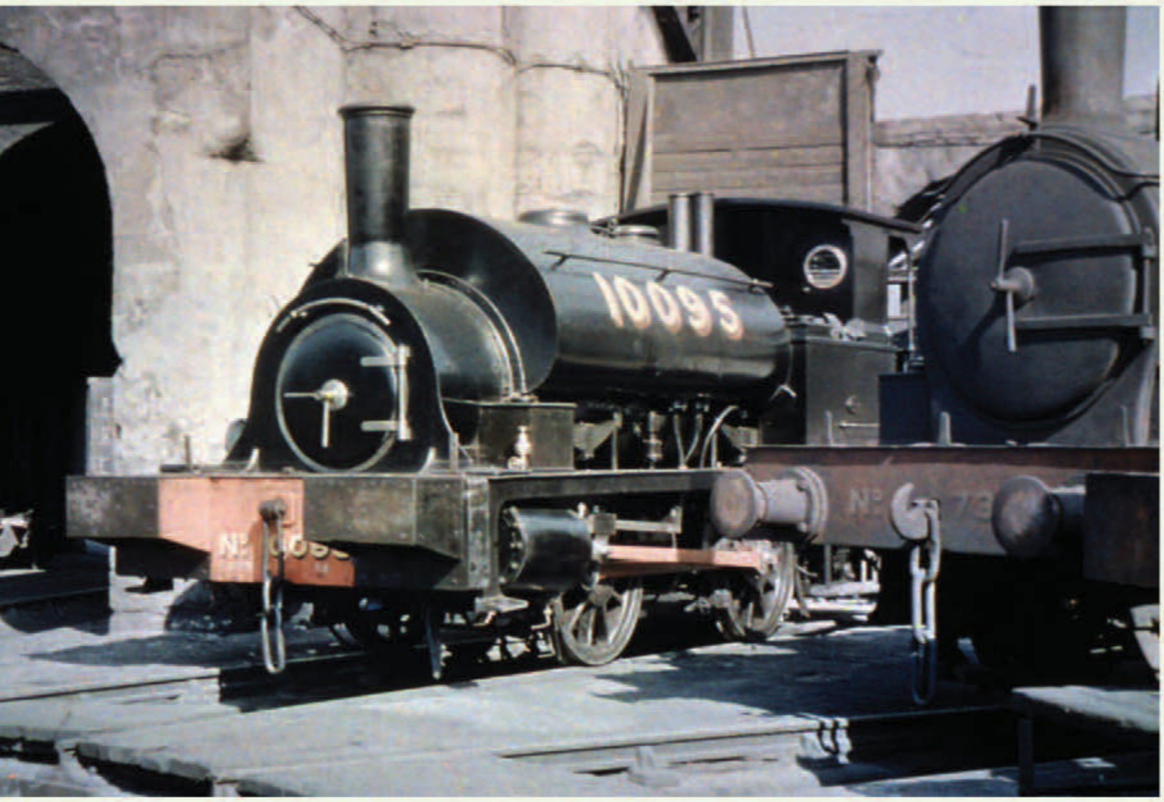


B12 4-6-0 No.8532 represents the top range of the Great Eastern Railway's motive power from 1911. Seen amidst the detritus of Southend shed in 1938, it is equipped with the disfiguring A.C.F.I. feed water heating apparatus which it carried until 1941. (Colour-Rail.com NE11)



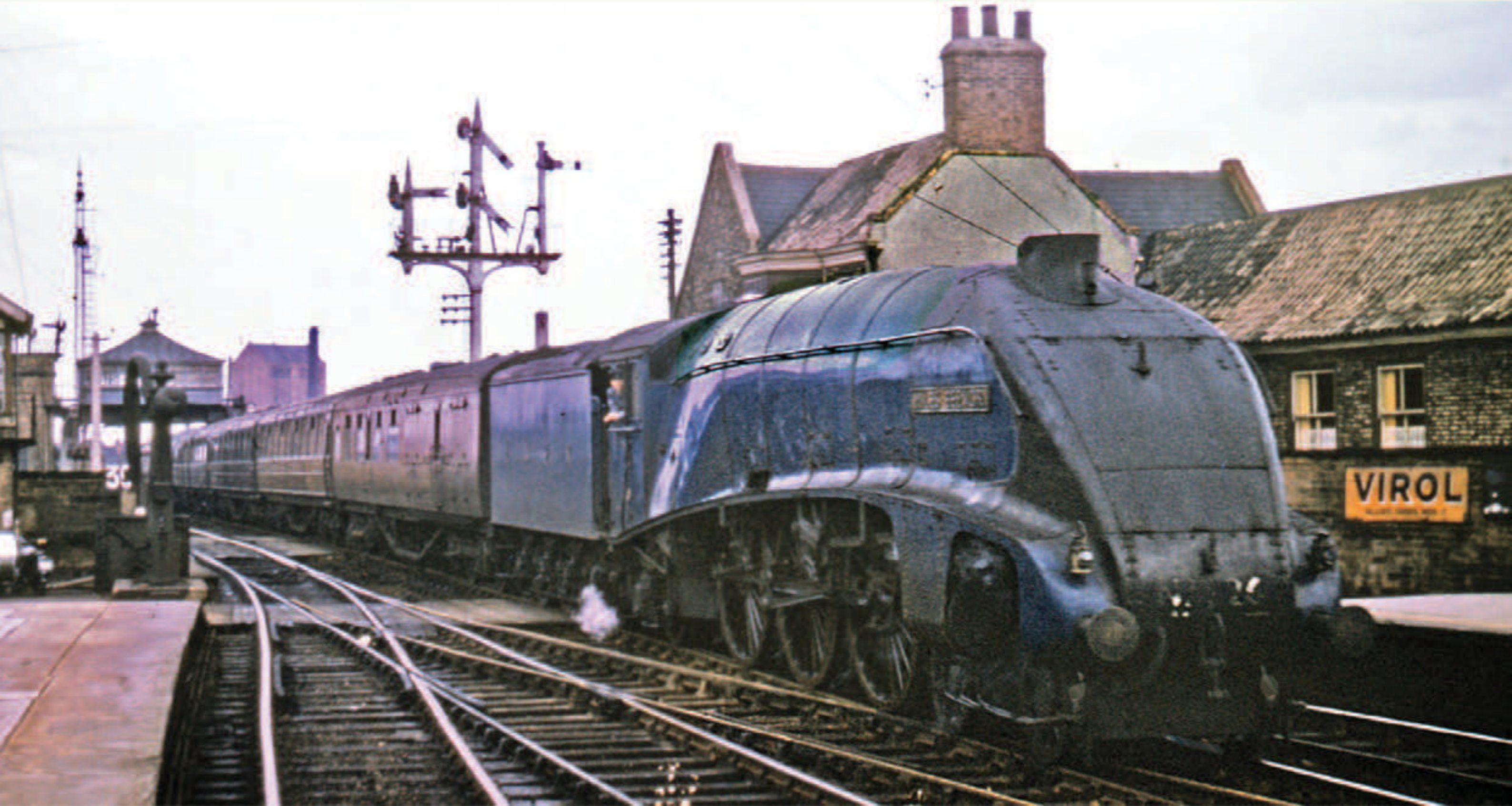
A3 No.100 *Spearmint* had received both its post-war green repaint and its new number and lettering when captured at Haymarket shed in 1949. (J. Robertson/Colour-Rail.com NE69)

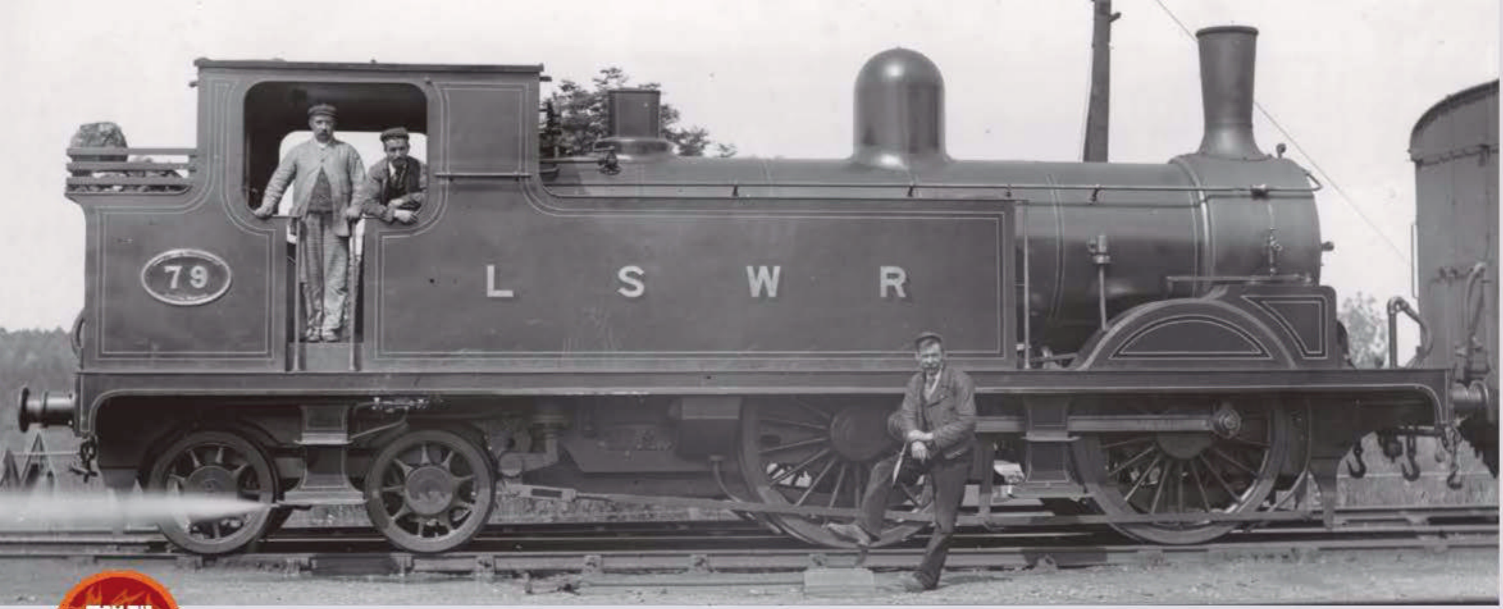




LEFT: **From the streamliners down to the humble four-wheel shunting 'Pug'... The Y9 0-4-0STs came from the North British Railway and were used as dock shunters at Leith. Resting at Edinburgh St. Margaret's shed in August 1938, No.10095 looks to be something of a shed 'pet', with polished smokebox door fittings and cab window frames and the paintwork clean enough to show its gold shaded numerals.** (L. Hanson/Colour-Rail.com NE52)

BELOW: **Post-war the LNER returned its A4s to garter blue with with stainless steel figures, as on No.26 *Miles Beevor* running through Selby station after crossing the swing bridge with an up express in 1948. The side skirting over the wheels was removed during the war to ease access for maintenance.** (H. N. James/Colour-Rail.com NE6)





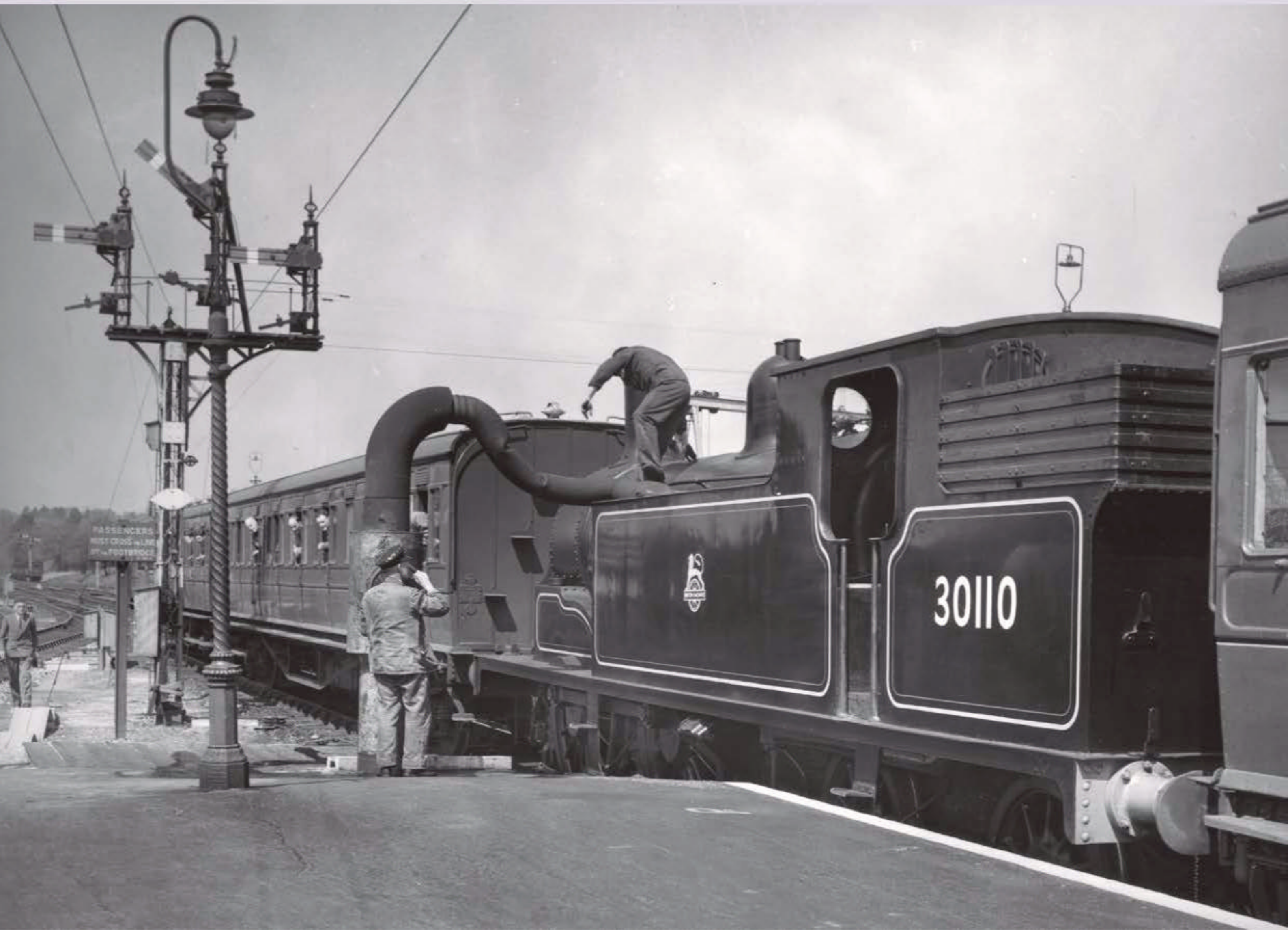
FROM THE PENDRAGON ARCHIVES

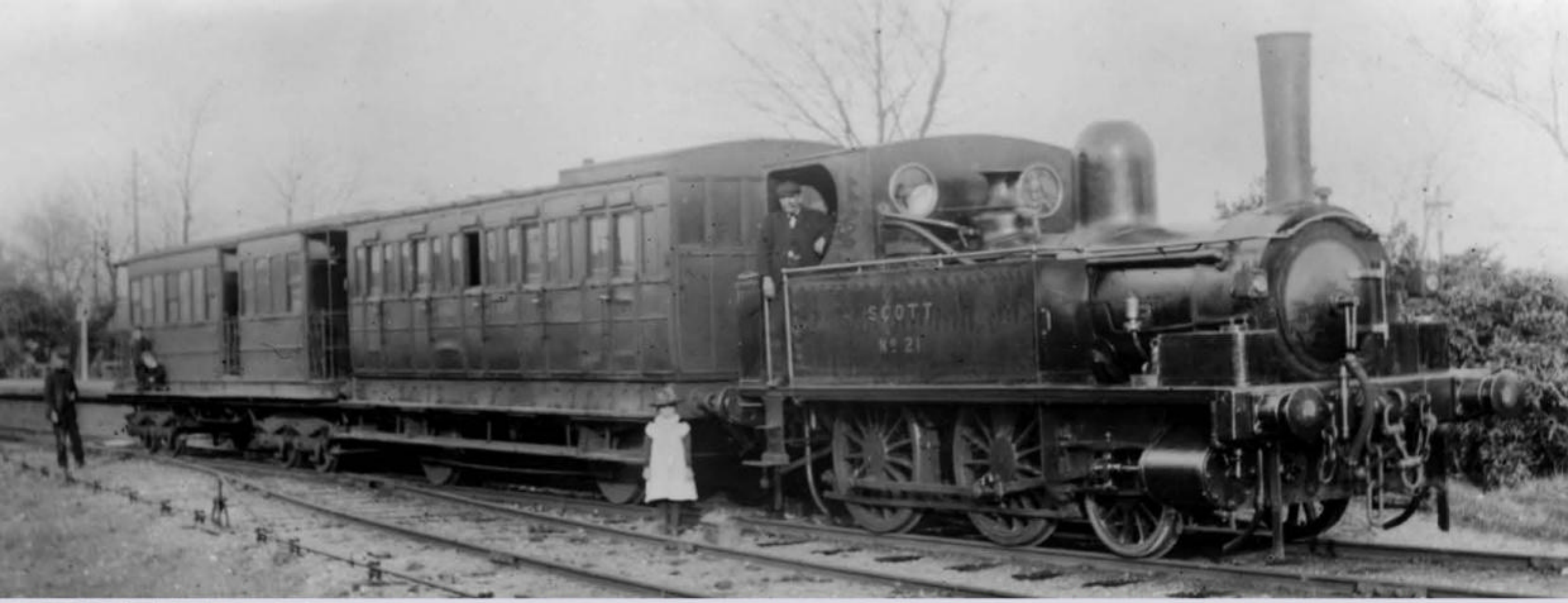
SOUVENIRS OF THE SOUTH WESTERN

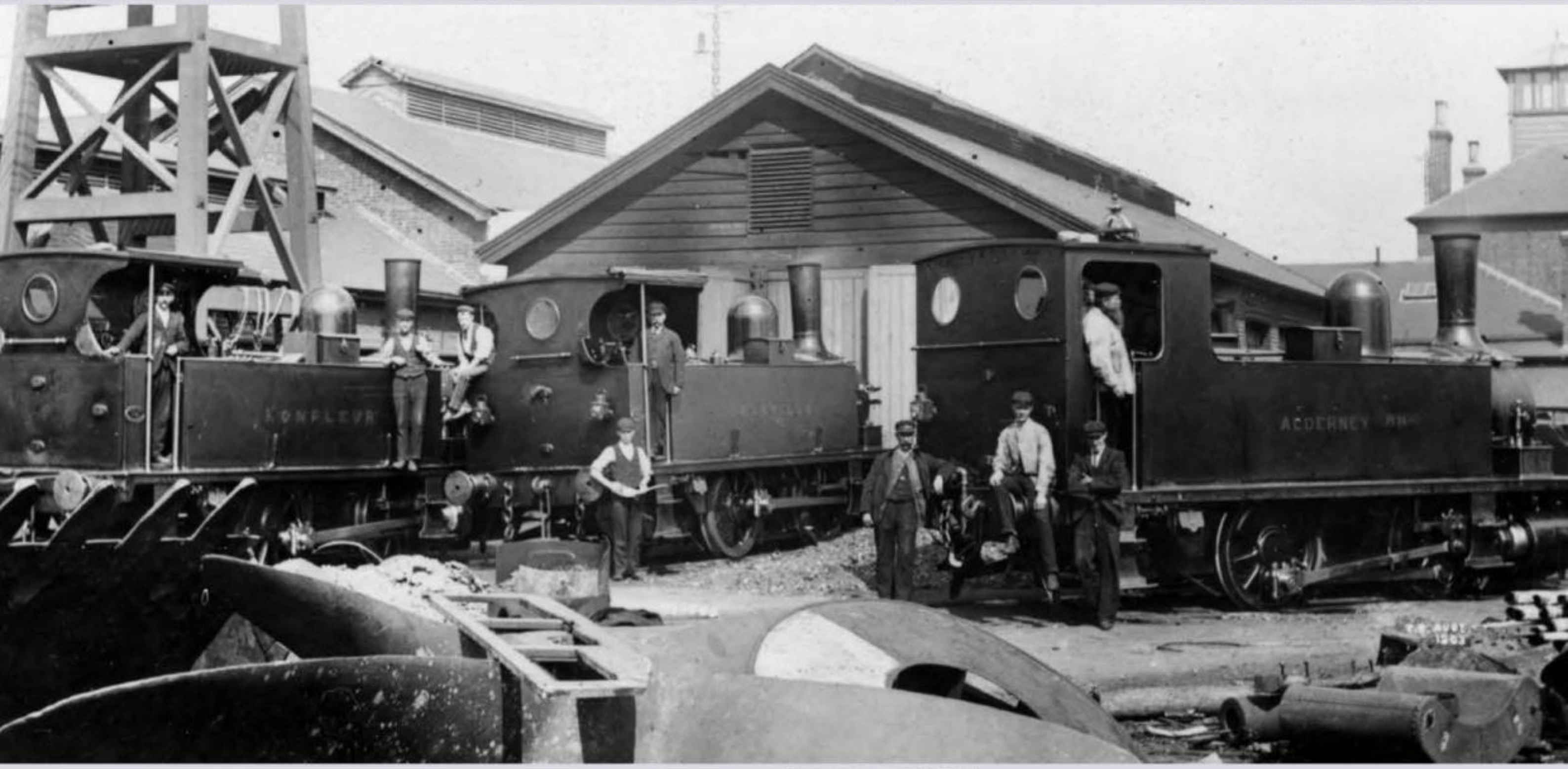
The London & South Western Railway was to become the largest of the companies which formed the Southern Railway at the grouping in 1923. Its territory included the main lines from London to Southampton, Bournemouth and Portsmouth, an important route west to Exeter and a network of secondary lines and branches in Devon and Cornwall. In 1892 it bought the Southampton Docks, while a number of minor byways also came within its portfolio – many of these reflected in this picture selection.

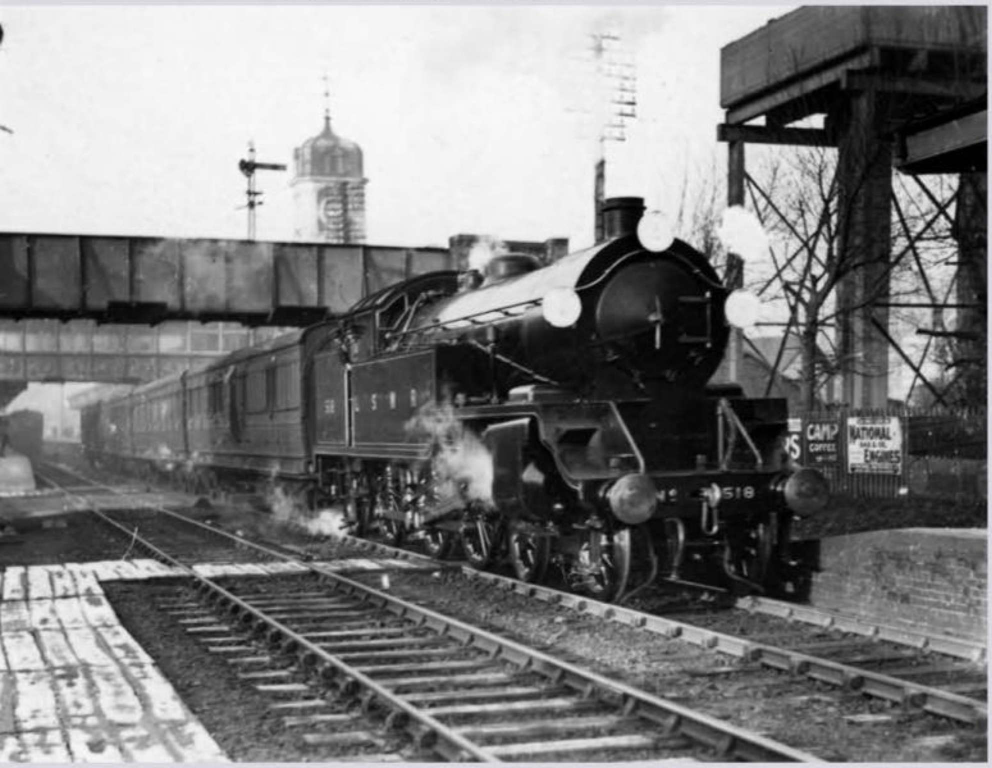
ABOVE: **The T1 Class was the first of several 0-4-4T classes on the London & South Western Railway, introduced by William Adams in 1894, a move on from the 4-4-2T arrangement for suburban services. Here is No.79, looking trim with its characteristic stovepipe chimney shunting stock at an unspecified location in August 1902. The smaller O2 Class which followed was more numerous and longer-lasting, though the last T1 was not scrapped until early British Railways days in 1951.**

BELOW: **Under Dugald Drummond the 0-4-4T type moved forward with the large M7 Class in 1897. No.30110 is taking water at Fareham on 3rd May 1953 while working a Stephenson Locomotive Society special from Gosport to traverse the Bishop's Waltham branch from Botley which had lost its passenger service in 1933. No.30110 is sandwiched between a pair of push-pull coaches. The M7s had long and useful lives, the last withdrawals not coming until 1964.** (Eric Bruton)









TOP: **The 3½-mile Lee-on-the-Solent Light Railway to Fort Brockhurst opened in 1894. It was a money-loser from its early days and only absorbed very reluctantly by the Southern Railway which ended the passenger service in 1931. This is its train at Fort Brockhurst on Boxing Day 1900 fronted by 2-4-0T *Scott* which had been bought by the LSWR Engineer's Dept. from George England & Co. in 1861; later it worked the Lee-on-the-Solent LR from 1894 until withdrawn in 1909.**

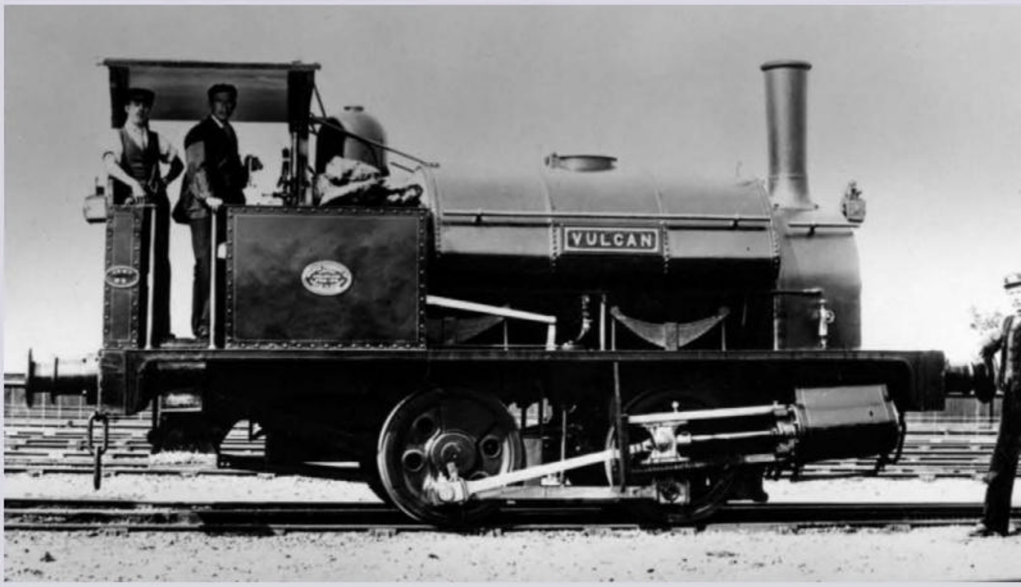
ABOVE: **Southampton Docks shed in August 1903 with three of the B4 0-4-0Ts built from 1893 to 1908 for shunting the dock lines at Devonport and Southampton. They are Nos.95 *Honfleur,* 102 *Granville* and 85 *Alderney*. The driver of *Granville* needs to fetch a cloth to give it a polish...**

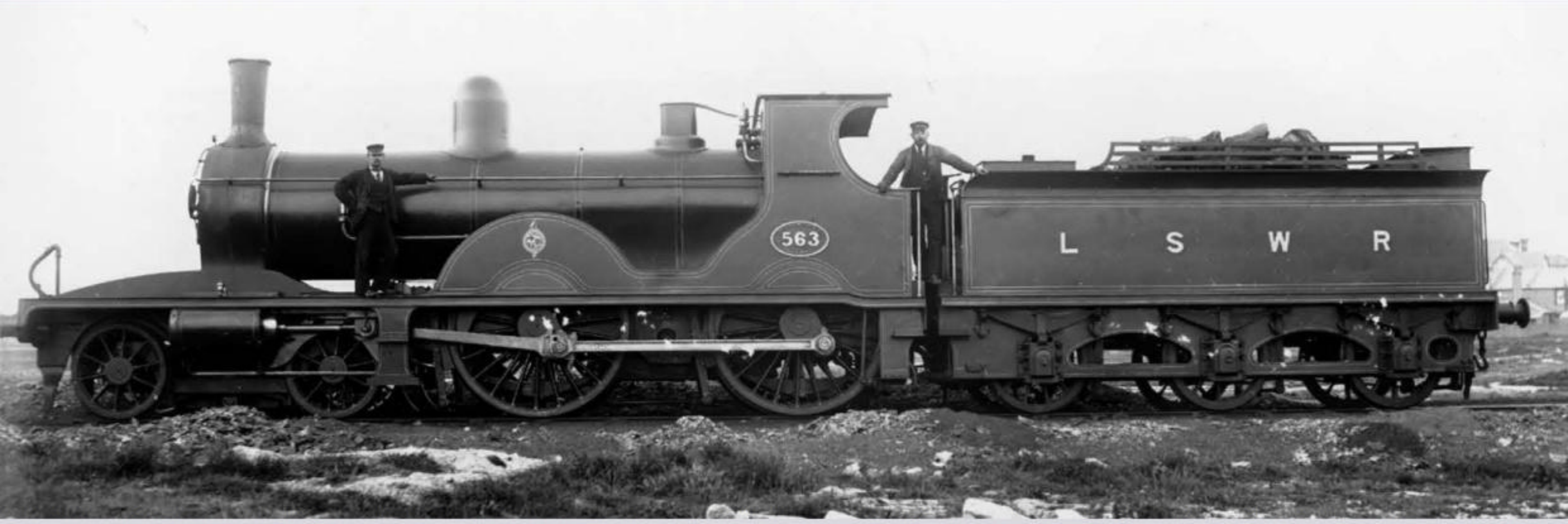
LEFT: **Forward to 1921 and we find one of the five H15 4-6-2Ts designed by R. W. Urie for transferring heavy goods trains between yards in the London area. Seen leaving Southampton, No.518 was tested in 1922 to see if it was suitable on local passenger trains from there to Bournemouth. It wasn't.**

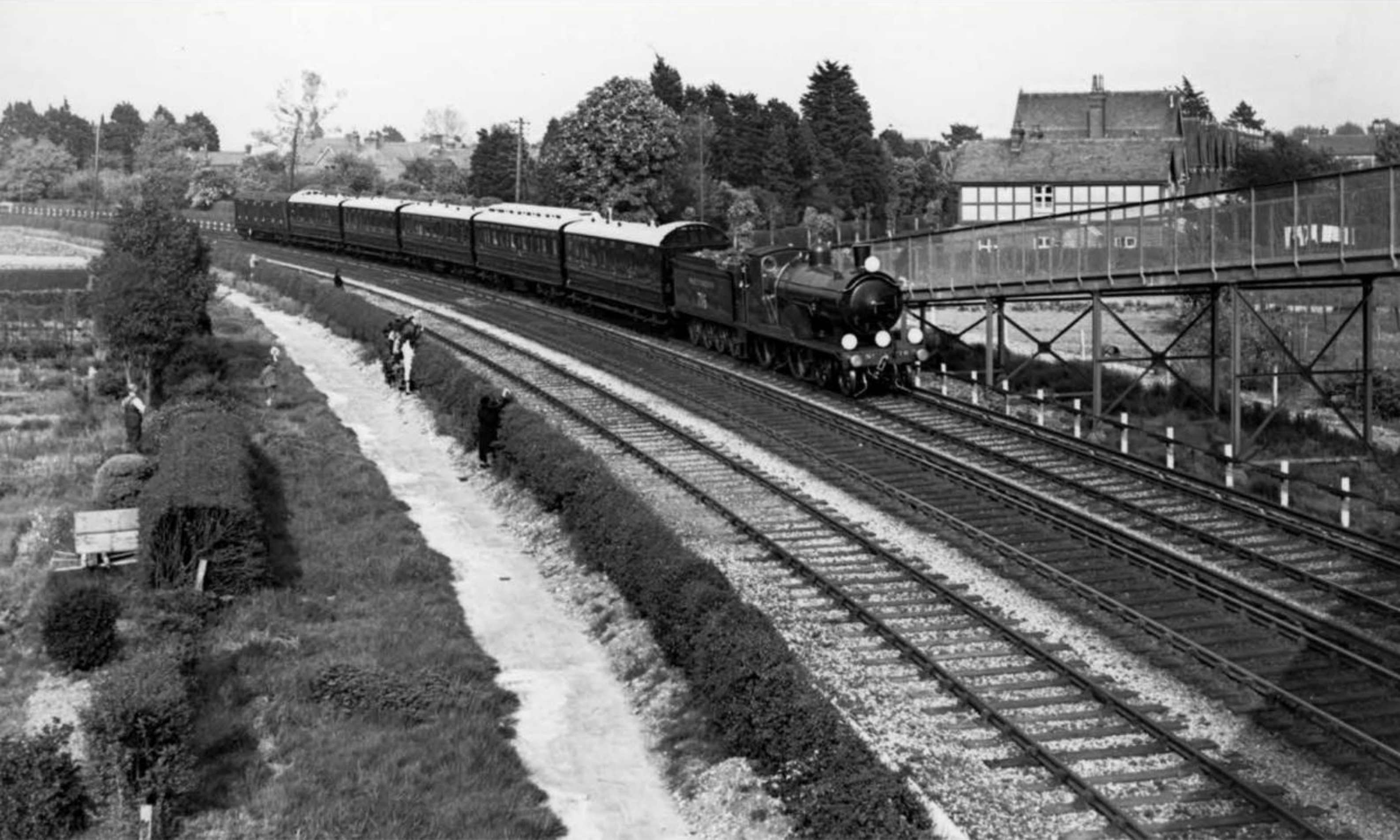
RIGHT: **0-4-0ST *Vulcan* was built by the Vulcan Foundry in 1878 for the Southampton Dock Co. and passed to the LSWR on its acquisition of the Docks in 1892. It was later used on the construction of the Bentley & Bordon Camp Light Railway and was sold by the Southern in 1924.**

BELOW: **T3 Class 4-4-0 No.563, representing a William Adams design from 1892. Incorporating Adams's innovation of front bogies and blastpipe to enhance draughting, these engines have been acclaimed as having "pointed to the future trend of design more surely than [their] contemporaries". No.563 used to be preserved in the National Collection.**

BOTTOM: **Even fifteen years after the LSWR had ceased to exist, the Southern had no hesitation in employing one of Drummond's excellent T9 4-4-0s on Royal Train duty. A gleaming No.716 heads a Victoria–Portsmouth working near Havant on 19th May 1937. The T9 is as rebuilt with a superheated boiler after the grouping by R. E. L. Maunsell.**







THE FAILURE OF POST-WORLD WA

BY GARY BONSALL

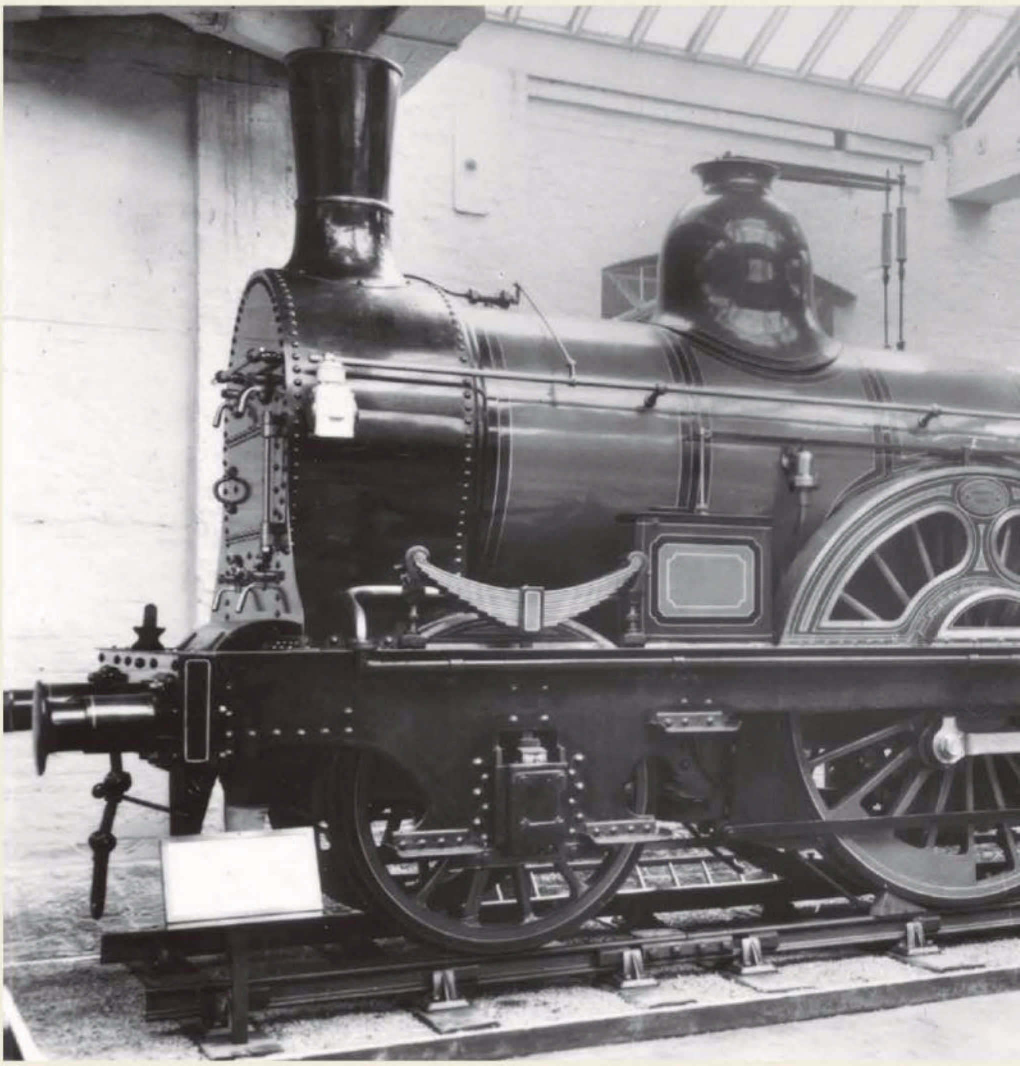
Sir Eric Geddes, 1914
(Wikimedia Commons)

During World War I, thought was already being given to plans to reconstruct and reshape not only the British transport system but the entire British state for the post-war peace. This reconstruction seemed likely to make peacetime Britain a more egalitarian country, one, in Lloyd George's words, "fit...for heroes to live in".[1] A super-ministry, the Ministry of Ways and Communications (MWC), was proposed as part of the reconstruction movement and was intended to coordinate the whole of British transport: railways, canals, locks and harbours, railway-owned steam vessels, roads and road transport, light railways and tramways, mercantile marine and navigation and aerial transport (although at the time, of course, the latter was extremely limited). Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly to modern eyes, electricity generation was also proposed to form part of the new transport ministry's remit. However, it should be noted that at that time electrified railways and tramways were the largest users of electric power (as much as 60% to 70% of the total) and it could thus be argued that it made sense that this element should also fall within the proposed ministry's remit.

The MWC was the brainchild of Sir Eric Geddes, its Minister-Designate (and subsequently notorious for the 1921 'Geddes Axe' recommendations for harsh cuts in public spending) and was born out of wartime experience in which the state successfully took control of many areas of production and commerce including coal, munitions, food, agriculture and transport including canals, shipping, road haulage and, of course, through the Railway Executive Committee, the previously fragmented and over-competitive railway industry.[2] It was thought by some that what had worked so well in wartime would translate into peacetime reconstruction and, in the words of Arthur Neal, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport in 1919, "do justice" to taxpayers and the travelling public, while also doing justice to the country's transport agencies which had done sterling work during the war.[3]

Unfortunately, these idealistic desires for national reconstruction based upon egalitarianism soon foundered upon the rocks of both conservative vested interests and arguments about what reconstruction actually meant and, almost no sooner than it was proposed and after much opposition in both Houses of Parliament, the proposed MWC was stripped of most of its responsibilities, renamed the Ministry of Transport by the House of Lords, and its responsibilities limited to just roads and railways.[4] Geddes thus became the first holder of the post of Minister of Transport, rather than Minister of Ways and Communications, in May 1919 and, given that he was a professional railwayman, he focused upon the need for railway reform while, perhaps unsurprisingly, neglecting the question of how the road network ought to be developed. There were two main schools of thought about the best way forward for the railways: nationalisation (first mooted as early as 1844 in Gladstone's Railway Regulation Act) or continued private sector ownership (and it can be argued that this debate is still current today, over a century later).

However, it was clear that there could be no reversion to the pre-war situation of *laissez-faire* railway competition when there was no central oversight and each railway company had its own individual Act of Parliament. Although figures including Lloyd George and even Churchill hinted at nationalisation as a possible way forward for the railways, the vested power of the 'railway interest' and Geddes's own negative view of nationalisation meant that the solution he arrived at was the Railways Act 1921. The Act, sometimes referred to as 'the Grouping Act', amalgamated the existing 120 railway companies into the 'Big Four' geographically based monopolies: the Great Western Railway, the London Midland & Scottish Railway, the London & North Eastern Railway and the Southern Railway. The grouping, which took place in 1923, provided the structure of the rail network for the next 25 years until nationalisation



Preserved North Eastern Railway 2-4-0 No.910, built in 1875, one of the locomotives used by the NER during Eric Geddes's time with the company 1904-1915. It is seen in the old York Railway Museum opened by the LNER in 1927. (Pendragon Collection)

R I RECONSTRUCTION AND THE RAILWAYS ACT 1921

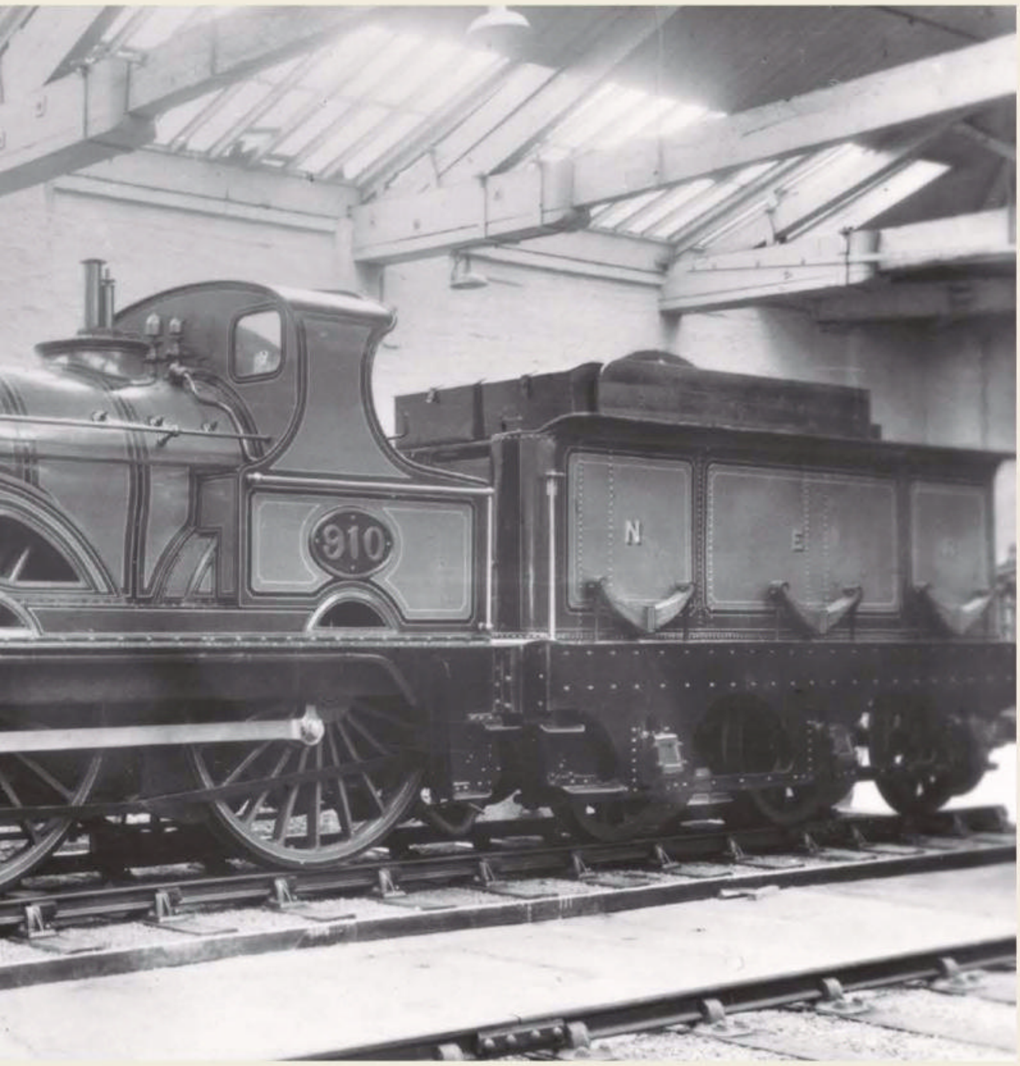
in 1947. This, of course, was shortly after World War II when, once again, the railways had seemed to operate more effectively under Government control.

Before the First World War, British railways were operated by around 120 competing private companies (which between them also owned over a third of canals) but, when the war broke out in 1914, these companies were unified under the Regulation of the Forces Act 1871 and brought under Government control (nominally through the Board of Trade) but were operated by the Railway Executive Committee (REC) consisting of railway general managers. Although the railways (and the railway-owned canals) were placed under Government control at the very beginning of the war, shipping and the remaining canals remained independent until spring 1917. Road transport, which only came under Government control in February 1918, was insignificant in comparison with the other modes at this time and the fact that it was about to become a major competitor to the railways (when a huge glut of military surplus vehicles entered the market and were snapped up by nascent haulage businesses) seems to have evaded most contemporary observers.[5] Given that the railways had the longest period under (and seemingly benefited from) Government control, they provided the best template for reconstructionist transport policies. Indeed, the overwhelming conclusion in the historiography is that, during this period of unified operations, the railways worked more efficiently and economically than they did in the era of competition. However, although wartime working led to the adoption of more unified and efficient methods of operation, it also had negative impacts on investment and the railways' cost-price structure, meaning that the railways encountered significant problems in the immediate post-war years.[6]

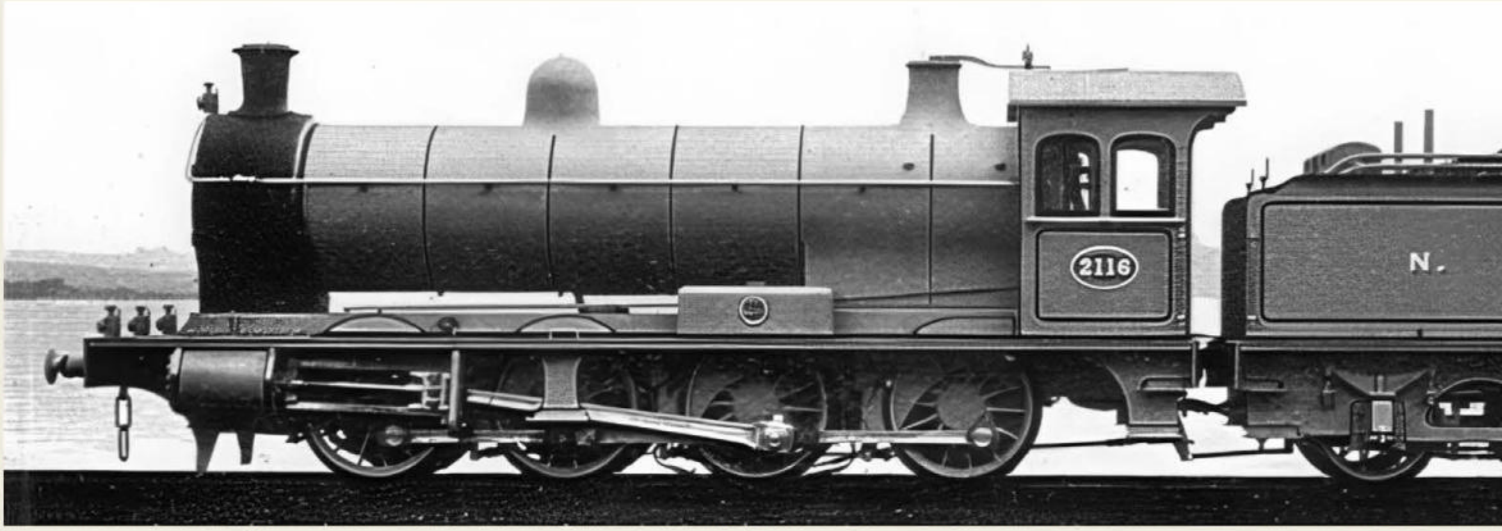
This being the case, even before the war ended, plans for the future organisation of the railways were based on the assumption that there could be no return to the former competitive system and that the railways should be unified under Government control, although it was unclear whether ownership should be private or public.[7] However, by the time of the Armistice the complex matter of what was to be done about the future of the railways, "which exercised the Government's ingenuity to the full", had still not been resolved and the question of the best form of ownership and control remained undecided.[8]

Concurrently with thoughts about the future of transport, consideration was being given to the need to plan for general post-war reconstruction from 1916 when Asquith, the then Prime Minister, founded a reconstruction committee to report on economic and commercial issues. Lloyd George subsequently created a Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917 "to promote the restoration and improvement of normal industrial, trading and social conditions at the end of the war", although this had little to say about future transport policy.[9] Initially, the idea of reconstruction focused on economic, rather than societal, reconstruction. However, when the war began to draw to a close in 1918, the philosophy of reconstruction began to change: rather than focusing just on economic reconstruction, growing concerns about the possibility of social upheaval (given, for example, the situation in Russia) led to reconstruction focusing more on societal reform, which matched Lloyd George's desire for a future founded on social justice based on "capitalism with a human face".[10]

David Lloyd George.
(Wikimedia Commons)



However, although Lloyd George was returned to power as head of a coalition government by the 'Coupon' or 'Khaki' Election of December 1918, the Conservatives, who seemed to adapt better to the post-war situation than did the Liberals, took by far the greatest number of seats and this led to inter-party tension and disputes over policy issues.[11] This Conservative majority of "hard-faced men" was important because they took the idea of reconstruction literally and supported a return to the old order of "orthodox economics supporting a laissez-faire society" in which the state reverted to playing only a minor role rather than the reconstruction ideas of progressives who, partly based on the fact that ten new Ministries and 160 Boards and Commissions had been created during wartime, saw the state continuing to play a major role for the greater good of society.[12] This divergence of views "provided a battleground on which the social aspirations unleashed by the war clashed violently with the tenets of economic belief inherited from the pre-war period".[13] Unfortunately, then, there was no consensus on what the term 'reconstruction' actually meant and there were no precedents for what was needed. The task of reconstruction was generally misunderstood and underestimated

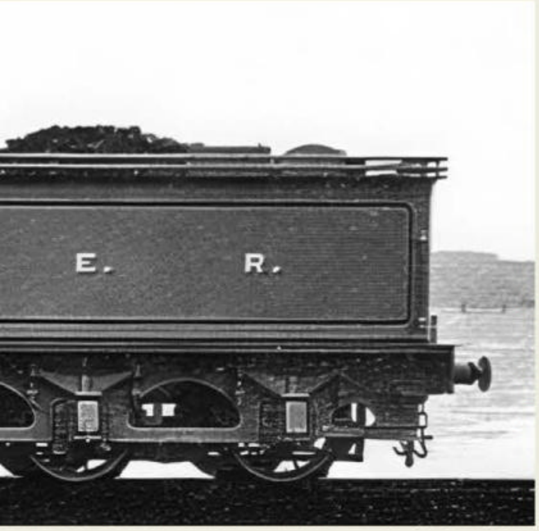


The first of Wilson Worsdell's T Class 0-8-0 freight engines, No.2116, built by the NER at Gateshead Works in 1901. (J. R. Howden *Boys' Book of Locomotives* 1907)

and it has been argued that, both conceptually and institutionally, the 'liberal capitalist order' had limited capacity for the task of reconstruction.[14]

Against this background of misunderstanding and inter-party rivalry, in which a large Unionist majority saw a return to the 'normalcy' of 1914 as being 'reconstruction', Geddes's MWC Bill, which attempted to bring the whole transport infrastructure of the country under Government control as part of the progressive reconstruction agenda, was viewed with intense suspicion, not to say hostility, by the majority of parliamentarians. This was partly because Geddes was not a career politician but a fascinating and domineering character who had somehow found a niche in railway management before being called upon to assist with the war effort. He was born to Scottish parents in India in 1875 and at the age of seventeen was in America where, *inter alia,* he worked as a freight train brakeman on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. He joined the North Eastern Railway Company in York as a traffic apprentice in 1904 and, by the outbreak of war in 1914, had risen rapidly through the ranks to become General

During World War I Geddes was both Deputy Director of Munitions and Director General of Military Railways. Both roles are illustrated here as British troops unload shells at the Battle of Passchendaele in July 1917. (Imperial War Museum non-commercial licence)



Manager of the company. Lloyd George initially appointed him as Deputy Director of Munitions (for which work he was knighted in 1916) before making him Director General of Military Railways (in the rank of Major General) and finally as First Lord of the Admiralty. He made a tremendous success of these roles (being described as one of Lloyd George's best finds from the business world) and his achievements and background seemed to make him ideally suited to advise on transport issues going forward.[16] However, his role as Lloyd George's political shadow during the war had seen him at the forefront of enlarging the functions of the state and this experience, where he was free from parliamentary constraints, allowed him to think incorrectly that his proposals for the new super-Ministry would be welcomed.[17]

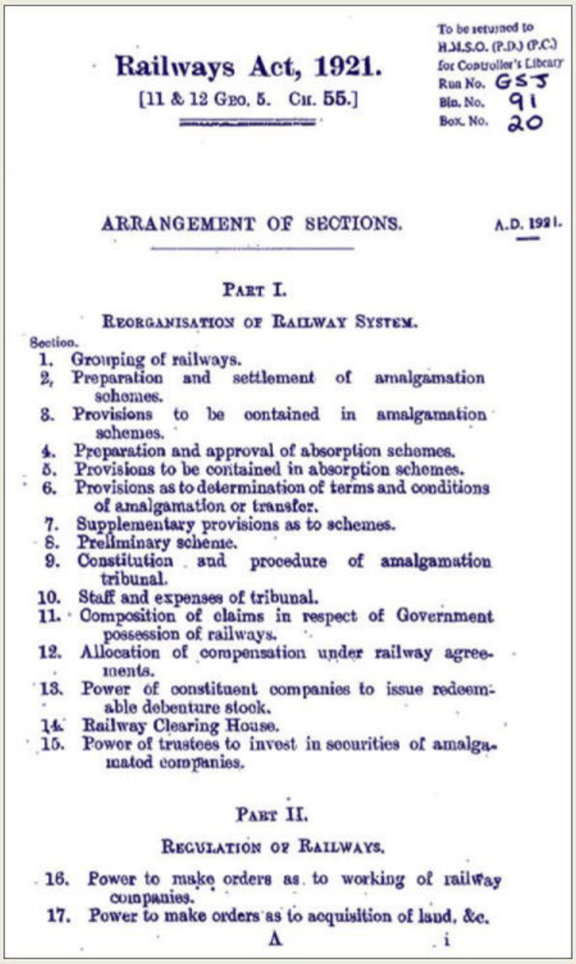
Within just a few days of the armistice in November 1918, Geddes produced a radical and "courageous" outline plan for an interventionist transport policy to support industrial recovery and promote social change, in part by coordinating railway and road construction to facilitate housing schemes and regenerate the rural economy, the latter being a particular concern of Lloyd George's.[18] Geddes's proposals were designed to integrate all transport services into a single system under State supervision through the new Ministry: railways, canals, docks and harbours, railway-owned steam vessels, roads and road transport, light railways and tramways, electric power supply, mercantile marine and navigation, and aerial transport (limited as this was at the time). This plan formed the foundation of his Bill, which was presented to Parliament in February 1919, two months after the election which had brought the "hard-faced men" into Parliament and at a time when the "political consensus (which) existed for the implementation of a centrally administered transport scheme" was beginning to unravel.[19]

Additionally, Geddes, however competent as a businessman and wartime leader, was naïve in political matters. He seemed to imagine, despite being advised to the contrary, that it would be easy to convince Parliament to accept his plans to take over control of all transport in the national interest. In fact, although there seemed to be general agreement among MPs about the Bill's aims, backbench Unionist MPs fought strongly for the continuing independence of individual transport modes. Geddes failed to anticipate, and was shocked by, the objections and hostility his proposals faced. For example, Edward Carson, MP for Belfast Duncairn, said in debate on the second reading of the Bill, when arguing for the decontrol of shipping, that it was "stark mad" to attempt to concentrate so much power in the hands of one individual. Importantly, in dismissing attempts at reconstruction being modelled on what had happened during hostilities, Carson argued that "it was grossly extravagant and uneconomical (to attempt) to improve our general organisation *merely* [my emphasis] because of what happened during the War".[20]

Only the railways and canals were content with the proposals for a unified system contained within the Bill, principally to protect themselves from bankruptcy.[21] Consideration of all other modes proved contentious and the Cabinet proved to be timid in the face of protests from spokesmen for vested interests, particularly in shipping, docks and tramways. Additionally, the Board of Trade argued against the inclusion of electricity supply, although it is questionable why this particular element was included in the Bill in the first place. The Cabinet, disingenuously, removed shipping and tramways from the Bill, arguing that this would improve its chances in Parliament, but this was a chimera: the Commons not only removed harbours, docks and electricity supply from the Bill but also much of the Ministry's proposed power over the roads.[22] Additionally, through Orders in Council the Commons stripped from the Bill the Minister's authority to assume direct control of the railways which the 'railway interest' in Parliament saw as being nationalisation by stealth.[23] Although Geddes himself was against nationalisation, suspicion of him was such that over 100 Unionist MPs refused "to close the gap between the rhetoric and reality of reconstruction" and objected to this proposal.[24] The clause allowing the Minister to take control was removed from the Bill in response to this opposition, effectively ending any idea of nationalisation or, indeed, of wartime methods being retained as part of transport reconstruction.

When the Act was finally approved in August 1919 (five months later than planned due to the opposition it encountered, and this legislative delay certainly played a part in ensuring that "this moment of systematic planning was briefly glimpsed") it was much weaker than had been intended.[25] Although the purpose of the Act remained to improve "the means of, and the facilities for, locomotion and transport",[26] in actuality, although Geddes's title was Minister of Transport, he had become, "practically speaking a minister of railways".[27] Importantly, however, it had been agreed in 1916 that the railways would remain under Government control for two years after the end of the war to allow a new policy for them to be designed.[28] This period allowed Geddes the opportunity to shape the course of the railways for the next 25 years through the Railways Act of 1921 which, it can be argued, was his greatest political achievement.[29]

Contents page of the Railways Act 1921.



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Railways Act, 1921.

[11 & 12 Geo. 5. Ch. 55.]

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS.

A.D. 1921.

Part I.

Reorganisation of Railway System.

Section.
1. Grouping of railways.
2. Preparation and settlement of amalgamation schemes.
3. Provisions to be contained in amalgamation schemes.
4. Preparation and approval of absorption schemes.
5. Provisions to be contained in absorption schemes.
6. Provisions as to determination of terms and conditions of amalgamation or transfer.
7. Supplementary provisions as to schemes.
8. Preliminary scheme.
9. Constitution and procedure of amalgamation tribunal.
10. Staff and expenses of tribunal.
11. Composition of claims in respect of Government possession of railways.
12. Allocation of compensation under railway agreements.
13. Power of constituent companies to issue redeemable debenture stock.
14. Railway Clearing House.
15. Power of trustees to invest in securities of amalgamated companies.

Part II.

Regulation of Railways.

16. Power to make orders as to working of railway companies.
17. Power to make orders as to acquisition of land, &c.

A i

Although the attempt to create the MWC thus failed to achieve the grand reconstructive ambitions which Geddes and Lloyd George originally had for it, it was a success insofar as it laid the groundwork for the 1921 Act and has thus been described as being part of one of the most creative moments in the history of British transport policy in the twentieth century.[30] Nevertheless, the plan to unify transport in the national interest as part of post-war reconstruction was left in ruins. Geddes failed to understand the *realpolitik* of the situation in which a large Unionist majority was not only suspicious of his personal motives, which they saw as a power-grab based on the previous freedom of action outside parliamentary constraints he had enjoyed in wartime, but they also viewed reconstruction differently. To them, the meaning was quite literal: they wanted to recreate the past system and not create a new social order, particularly a new order which smacked of State control. They also, while seemingly supportive in theory, chose, in the best conservative tradition, to continue to support the status quo and side with the individual transport modes which were determined not to come under Government control.

The MWC also failed in part because Lloyd George, a major proponent of the new order, effectively abandoned Geddes, the political ingenue and outsider, when spending much of 1919 at the Paris Peace Talks. Lloyd George also had to deal with the reality of creating a "society 'fit for heroes' to travel in (versus the) short-term political imperatives of government as economic slump, state decontrol and the cry of 'return to normalcy' intervened".[31]

Effectively, then, the flame of reconstruction only burned brightly for a very short period after the war and was soon extinguished in the face of reality. Geddes's political naivety and lack of support, coupled with the power of vested interests and ideological arguments about the meaning of reconstruction, meant that his plan to unify transport under centralised Government control was doomed to failure.

Nevertheless, even though the plans of Geddes for this super-Ministry failed, he was able to use his tenure as Minister of Transport (and, of course, his background as a senior railway manager) to shape the future course of the railways and his 1921 Act can be seen a natural conclusion to the steady stream of railway company amalgamations which had taken place throughout the previous 50 years and more: there were 281 companies in 1870 versus the 120 companies subsumed into the 'Big Four' in 1923. The Act was designed to both retain the railways in private ownership while attempting to make the industry more commercially sound. It was also intended to replicate some of the benefits which had seemingly accrued to the railways and the public through increased central control during the war years. Whether these aims were subsequently achieved or not is debatable, but it is clear that, despite the failure of his plan for an overarching MWC, Geddes played a hugely significant role in the development and operations of the railways if not, as was originally planned, of the whole of transport.

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LNER A4 Pacific No.4489 *Dominion of Canada* at the head of the the up 'West Riding Limited' streamlined train at Leeds Central station in 1939. The 35 locomotives of the A4 Class designed by Sir Nigel Gresley in 1935 (together with Sir William Stanier's 1937 LMS 'Coronation' Class) exemplify the 'Big Four', Geddes's creation.
(H. M. Lane/Colour-Rail.com NE205)

PAST SIGNS

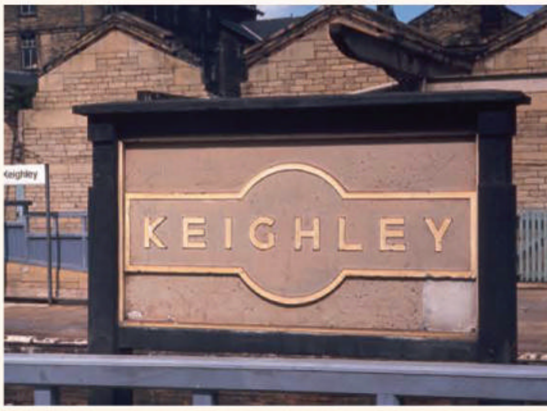
PHOTOGRAPHED AND DESCRIBED
BY GEOFFREY SKELSEY LVO

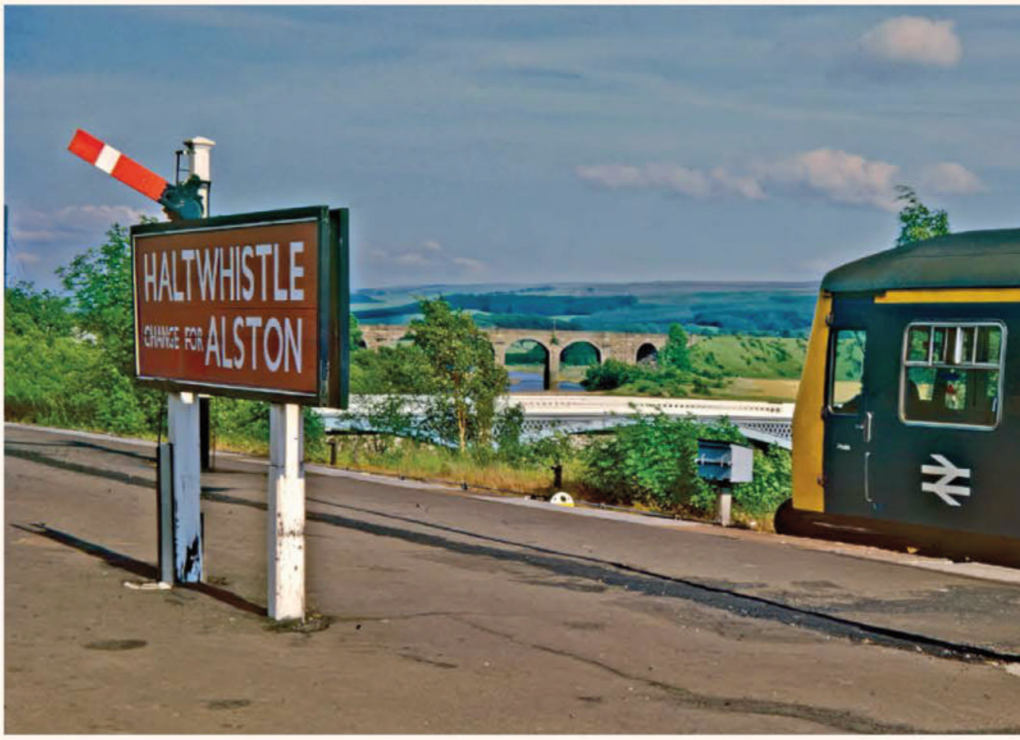
With the birth of a nationwide railway system in 1948, as well as the need to restore stations after wartime neglect, the time was ripe for a comprehensive signing policy. The design work was headed by A. J. White, formerly Advertising Manager for the London & North Eastern Railway, and that company's Gill Sans lettering was included in a comprehensive 'Sign Standards' manual issued in April 1948. Attention was also paid to Regional identity within a corporate framework, in the form of six distinctive Regional colours used for station paint, signs, printed material and uniform badges.

Most noticeable were station name signs in a new shape, inspired by the London Transport 'bullseye' signs from the 1920s. This first corporate branding lasted until a new identity was adopted, 'the changing face of British Rail', which began to be rolled out during 1965. The new standards were ubiquitous across the system, not incorporating Regional identifiers, but examples of older signs were still to be found towards the end of the nationalised era.

In these pictures we glimpse examples of station signs, which gave a sense of clarity and coherence to what was far from being a coherent railway system. The same is perhaps less true of today's ever-changing kaleidoscope of shapes and colours.

RIGHT: **The LMSR had embarked on a widespread station re-signing programme in 1938. Its distinctive 'hawkseye' station nameboard was installed across the system and many survived after nationalisation, a few into recent times. The sign at Keighley, its North Eastern Region tangerine faded, was still in place in August 1977. In the background looms the sign's successor, which proved to be less durable.**

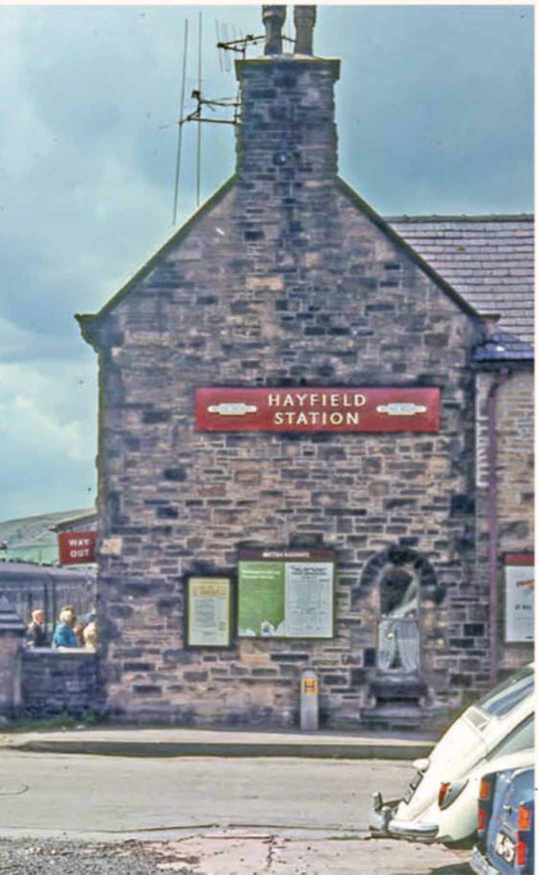


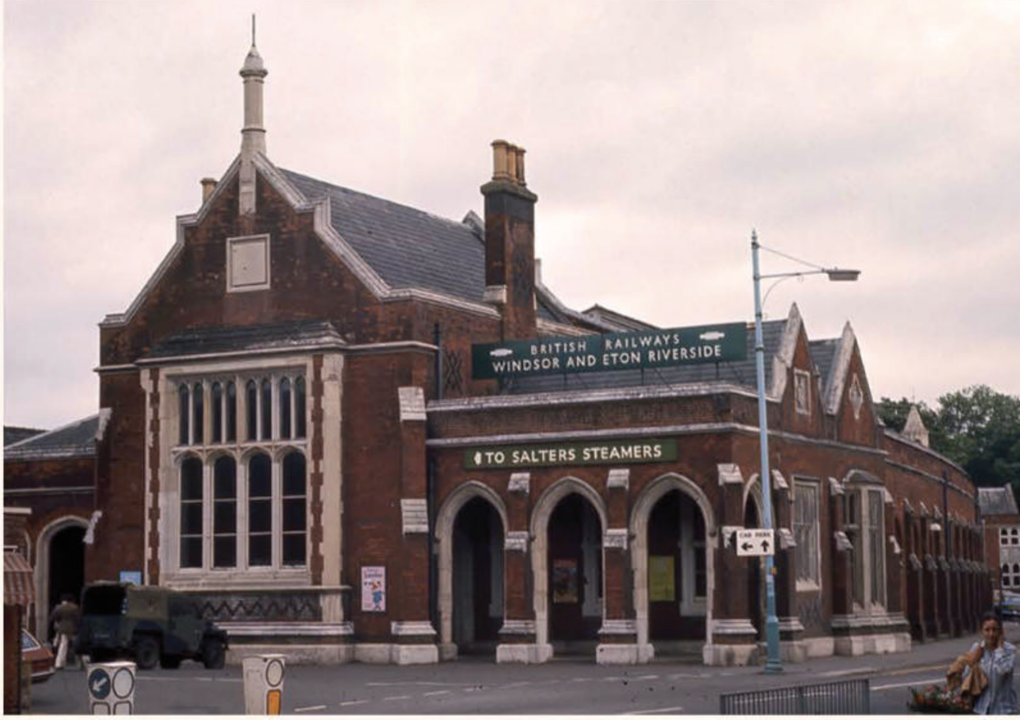


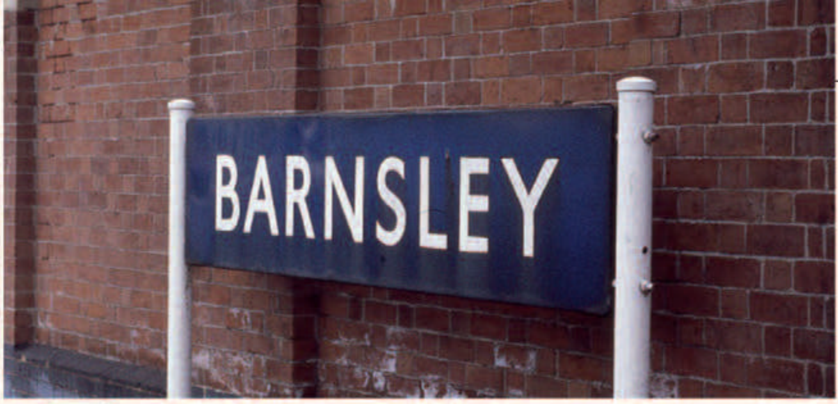
RIGHT: **Although BR standard signs became universal, some stations retained sign-written names on a Regional colour background, using supports and frames inherited from the previous regime. This is Haltwhistle in June 1973. There have been several explanations of the tangerine colour adopted by the North Eastern Region, none wholly convincing. It was certainly conspicuous.**

BOTTOM, LEFT: **Signing outside Hayfield station was in London Midland Region maroon and featured the word 'station', with larger 'totems'.**

BELOW: **BR's initial practice included large enamelled signs in Regional colours prominently positioned on the exterior of stations, as here at Windsor & Eton in 1977 in Southern green. Oddly the word 'station' was sometimes omitted.**

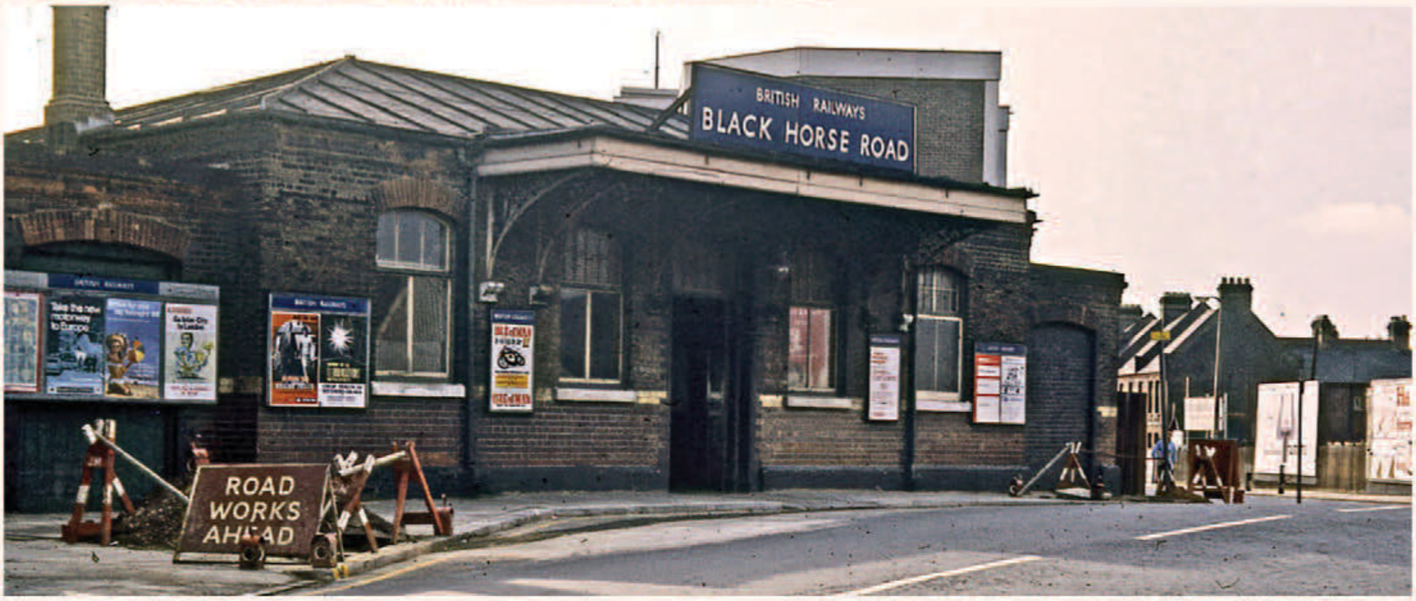


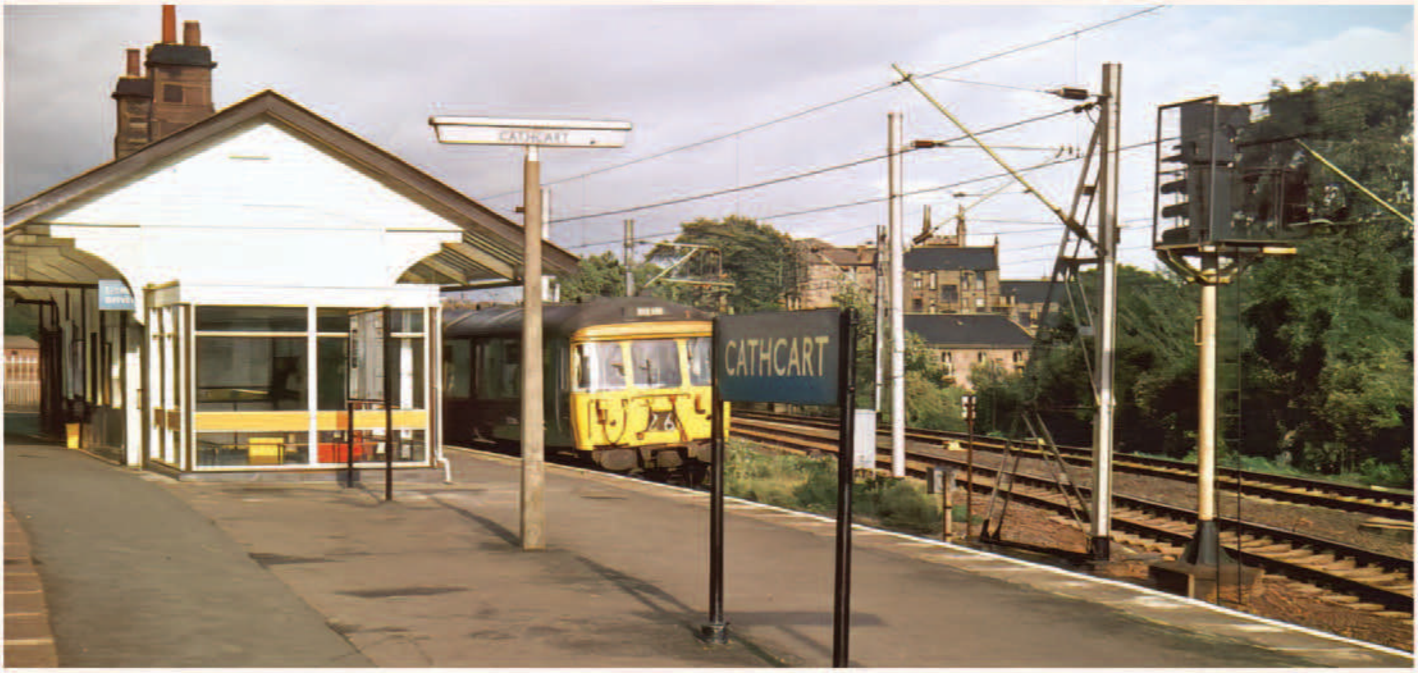


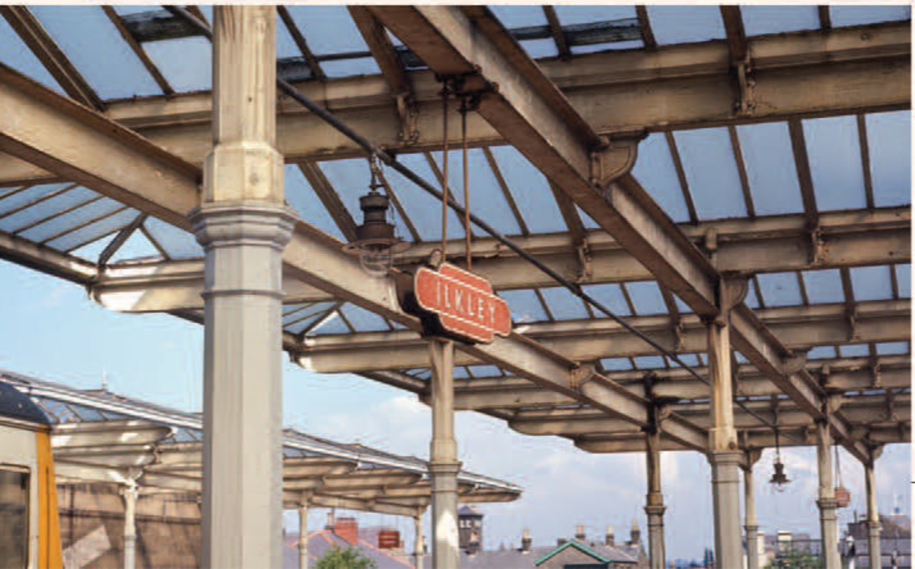


LEFT: **The former Barnsley Exchange station became the town's only station in April 1960 and was modestly refurbished. This neat running-in board probably dates from that improvement and survived in July 1984. The station was formerly in the Eastern Region, hence the blue colour.**

BELOW: **ER blue was seen in 1968 outside the nondescript BR building at Black Horse Road (Tottenham & Forest Gate line), on the large station name and on headings of the poster boards.**

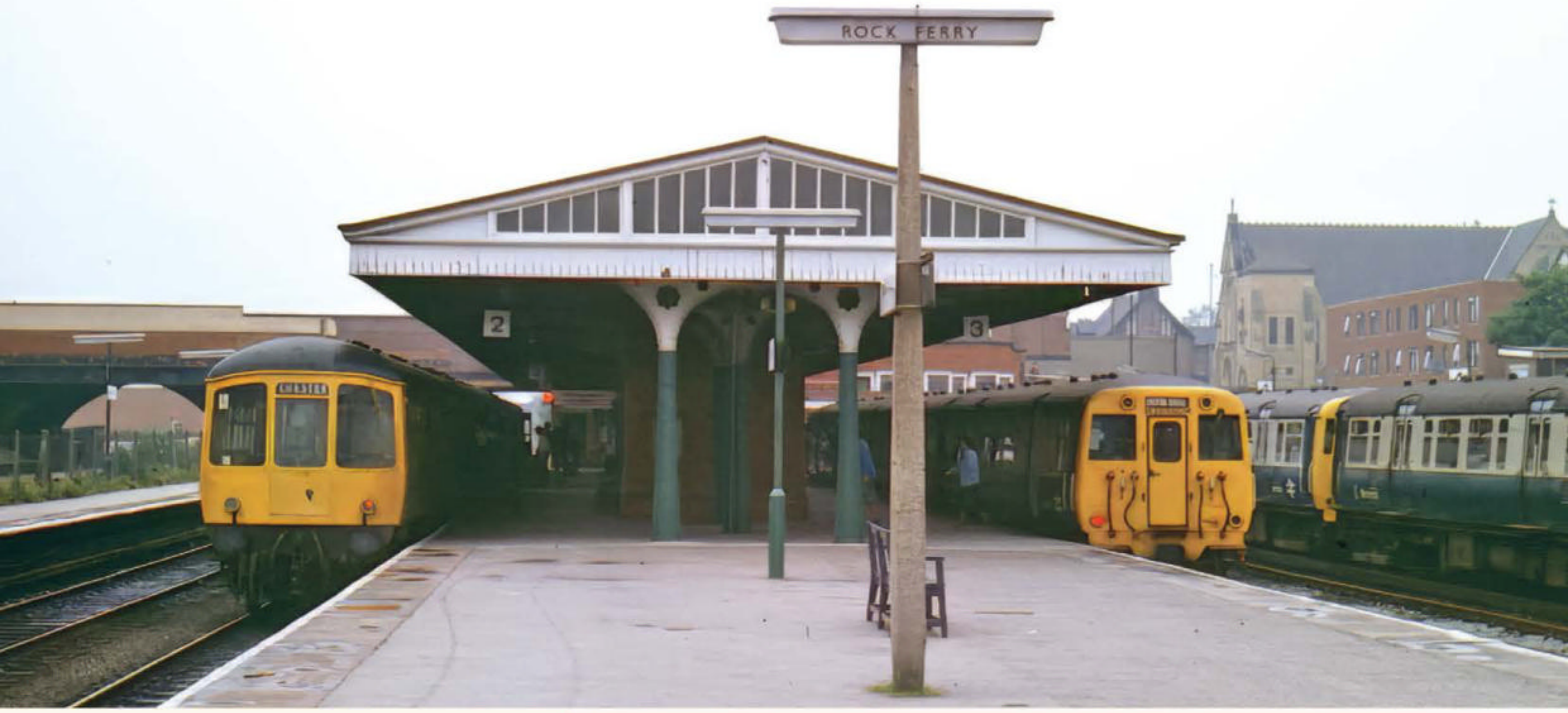






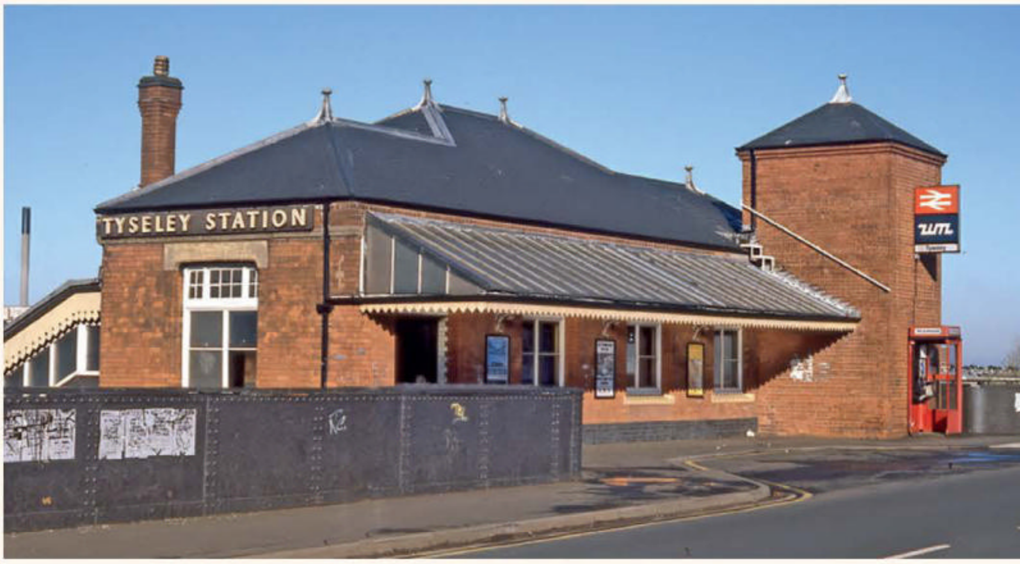
ABOVE: **The 'Glasgow Electric' network was comprehensively re-signed in the 1960s. The Scottish Region's light blue colour (supposedly derived from pre-grouping 'Caledonian Blue') is shown to advantage at Cathcart, a fine example of the standard station design inherited from the Cathcart District Railway.**

LEFT: **The distinctive shape of what were officially called 'lamp tablets' was the best-known feature of the re-signing undertaken from 1950. They appeared in Regional colours at thousands of stations and are seen here at Ilkley. Whilst the Western, Southern and London Midland Regions also chose their respective Regional colours to paint their stations, the North Eastern wisely chose an attractive grey instead.**

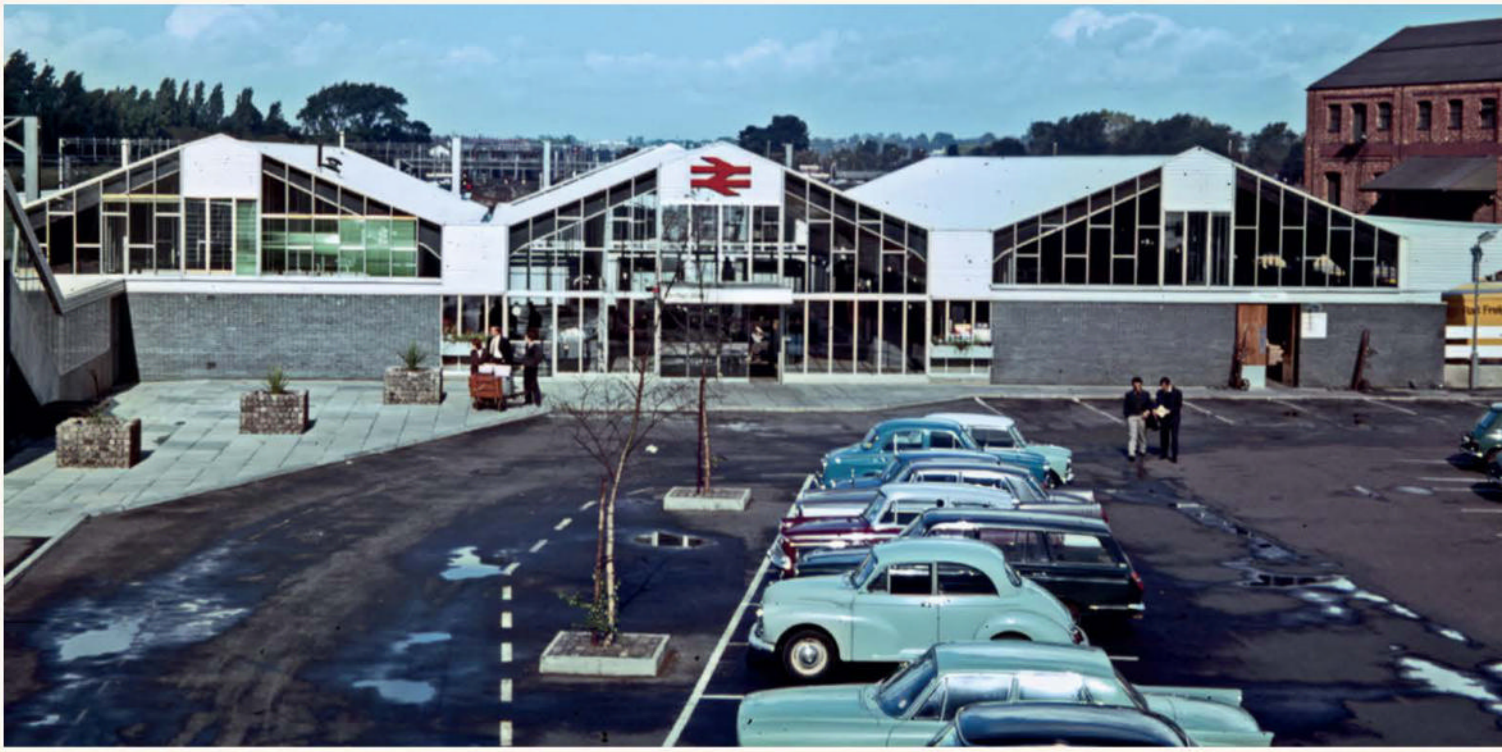


ABOVE: **A later BR initiative was to incorporate station names into the casings of the new fluorescent light fittings widely introduced when electric lighting was installed. At Rock Ferry in 1980 services towards Chester (left) were worked by a shuttle DMU service before third-rail electrification was extended. Lettering on this sign is in LMR maroon colour.**

RIGHT: **Early signing co-existed with more recent efforts, as here at Tyseley in 1986. The elaborate sign on the left is in Western Region brown, over twenty years after it was supplanted. To the right is the BR arrow and the motif of the West Midlands PTE.**



BELOW: **Surprisingly, perhaps, the British Rail 'double arrow', designed in 1964 by Gerry Barney of the Design Research Unit, has been the most enduring of all railway signage and was mandated at privatisation as a standard indicator for all stations irrespective of franchisee. Here it is on the less-than-inspiring Northampton station not long after its completion in 1977. This building was replaced in 2015 but the new premises still carry the symbol.**



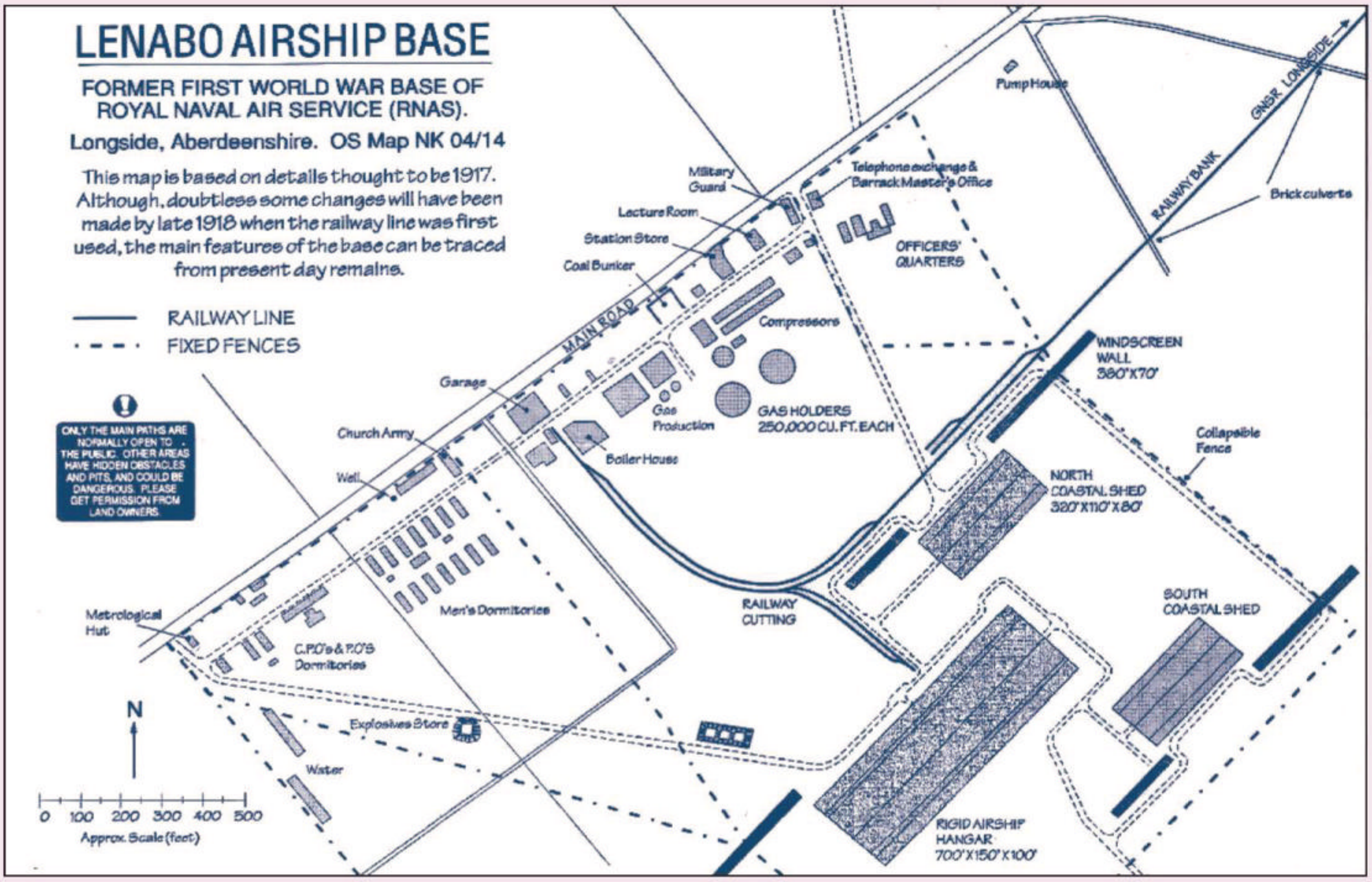
Longside signal cabin.
(Norris Forrest/The Transport Treasury)

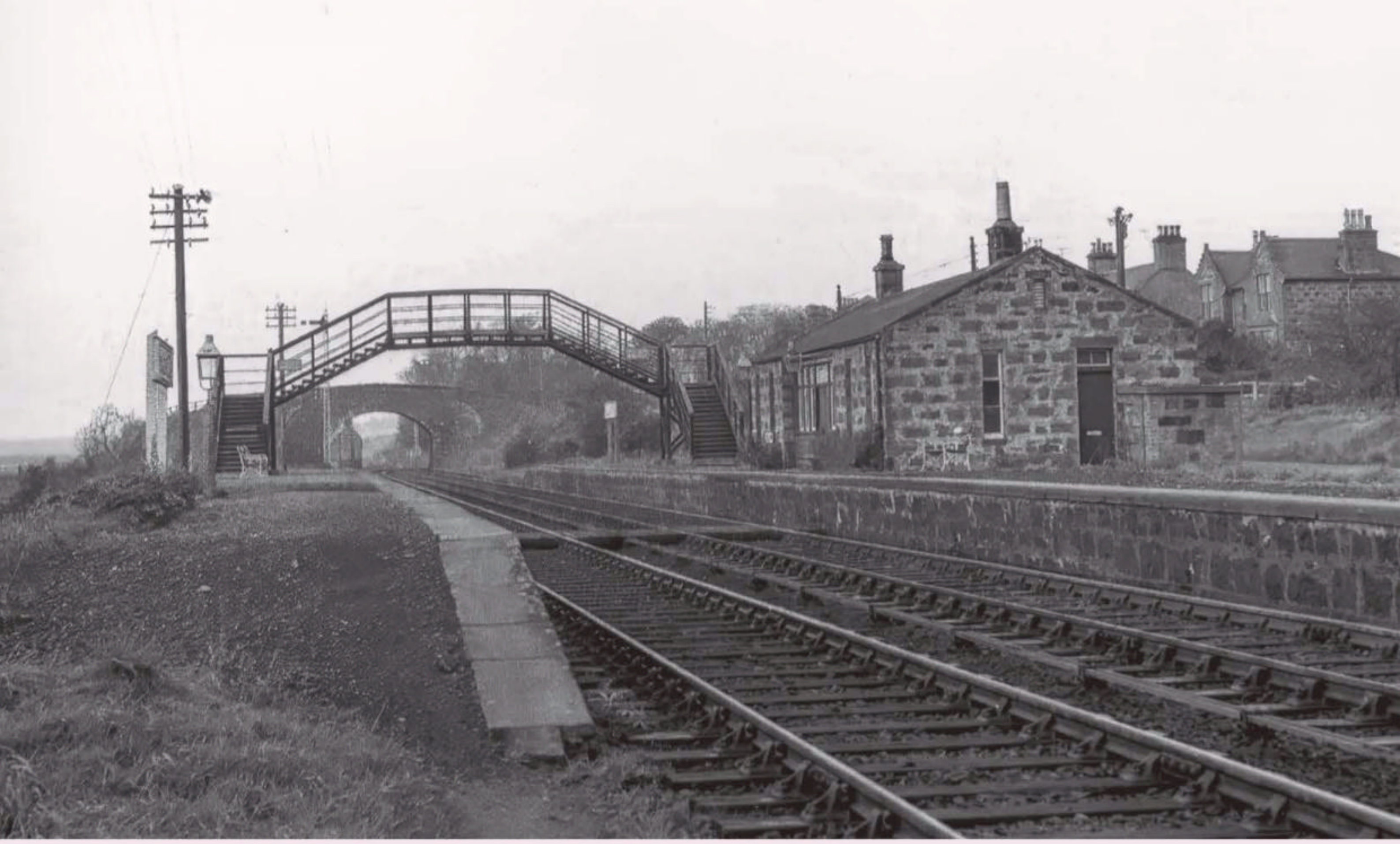
AN ACCIDENT WHILE DIS

BY ALISTAIR F. NISBET

During World War I the Admiralty provided the funding for large amounts of infrastructure to serve the Royal Navy's land bases (or stone frigates as they were sometimes known), particularly railways, where these were located near an existing main line railway; this included airfields for the Royal Naval Air Service for both fixed wing aircraft and dirigibles. Of necessity these tended to be located near the East Coast from where German warships could be easily spotted and attacked. One such location was Royal Naval Air Station

A plan of the former RNAS station at Longside/Lenabo. (Great North of Scotland Railway Association)


LENABO AIRSHIP BASE
FORMER FIRST WORLD WAR BASE OF ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE (RNAS).
Longside, Aberdeenshire. OS Map NK 04/14
This map is based on details thought to be 1917. Although, doubtless some changes will have been made by late 1918 when the railway line was first used, the main features of the base can be traced from present day remains.
RAILWAY LINE
FIXED FENCES
ONLY THE MAIN PATHS ARE NORMALLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. OTHER AREAS HAVE HIDDEN OBSTACLES AND PITS, AND COULD BE DANGEROUS. PLEASE GET PERMISSION FROM LAND OWNERS.
N
0 100 200 300 400 500
Approx. Scale (feet)
Metrological Hut
C.P.O's & P.O'S Dormitories
Men's Dormitories
Well
Church Army
Garage
MAIN ROAD
Coal Bunker
Station Store
Lecture Room
Military Guard
Telephone exchange & Barrack Master's Office
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
Pump House
GNSR LONGSIDE
RAILWAY BANK
Brick culverts
Compressors
Gas Production
GAS HOLDERS 250,000 CU. FT. EACH
Boiler House
WINDSCREEN WALL 380'X70'
Collapsible Fence
NORTH COASTAL SHED 320'X110'X80'
SOUTH COASTAL SHED
RAILWAY CUTTING
Explosives Store
Water
RIGID AIRSHIP HANGAR 700'X150'X100'



MANTLING A RAILWAY

Longside station looking west when both tracks remained *in situ*. Although the main station building was on the Peterhead- bound platform, the opposite track looks as though it is the only one in use then. (Norris Forrest/The Transport Treasury)

(RNAS) Longside in Aberdeenshire for which the nearest railway was the Great North of Scotland Railway's (GNS) Maud Junction to Peterhead line. The air station was just over three miles south of Longside village and close to a hamlet known as Lenabo – the origin of this may be from the Gaelic 'lennam bo' meaning wet meadow of the cows which was an appropriate name as the area was at that time mostly peat bog.

Work started in 1915 and once the area was drained and the peat cleared the base was constructed and became operational in late 1916, at one time some 1,500 naval personnel being based there. The first two airships allocated there were delivered by rail in a deflated state. The names Longside and Lenabo seem to have been interchangeable, at least locally if not officially, while the airships tended to be known in the Service as Gasbags and locally as Lenabo Soos (Lenabo sows). The airships based at Longsight managed to put in some impressive flying hours, one of them (N511) achieving no fewer than 161 hours 21 minutes in the air while undertaking escort duties from the Pentland Firth to the Firth of Forth. It was considered to be a record duration for any British airship.

In 1915 the Admiralty requested the GNS to build it a railway connection to the Airship installation from near Longside station although there did not seem to be any hurry for the work to be done because much discussion and exchanging of letters ensued, it being 15th August 1917 before agreement was finally reached. Nevertheless it was one thing to agree to provide a line but quite another to actually build it at the height of the Great War. The railway company was prepared to supply second-hand material and estimated the costs at around £19,050 but, when tenders were sought for the construction work, the Admiralty ended up accepting one for £23,015 1s 9d from a Mr. Tawse. There were already two signal boxes at Longside but the railway company decided that one was to be closed and thereafter all signalling and points would be worked from the East box.

Slow progress

Nothing seems to have gone well, for progress was slow through lack of labour, most suitable men being enlisted in the military by then, and eventually the contractor asked for German Prisoners-of-War to be supplied to assist. Even supplying an engine and wagons to work the line proved to be a problem. The Admiralty had suggested that the contractor should keep a small engine at Longside permanently but the railway staff all felt that their locomotives were adequate for all the shunting work required there because "A special engine would stand three fourths of the day doing nothing."

Nevertheless the Admiralty was adamant that it wanted one supplied to Tawse; therefore both the North British and Caledonian Railways were asked if they could help but neither had anything to spare by then – many regular services had been either curtailed or closed entirely for the duration because of a shortage of crews and the need to keep military materials moving, while all available locomotives were engaged in moving those materials. Eventually the Railway Executive Committee was asked to help and managed to supply a contractor's type of engine. The GNS hired wagons to the Contractor for 2s 6d per wagon worked over its system. Once these were available it was decreed that the workers on the branch should be under the supervision and direction of the Longside station master.

Work did eventually come to an end and the line was inspected by Col. Pringle for the Ministry of Transport on 4th July 1918 – although it was not expected to be used for carrying passengers it would be connected to the GNS and would therefore need official sanction. Once construction finished the Admiralty managed to find a locomotive of its own, a newly built Kerr Stuart 0-4-2ST No.1024, Works No.3127/1918, which remained until the decision to close the base at which point it was promptly despatched to work at RAF Leuchars.

Closure and demolition

After the war was over no further use was expected for RNAS Longside and the airship station closed in mid-1919, thus meaning an end to many local jobs. Fishermen were once again able to freely pursue the 'silver darlings' (herrings) although the pre-war market in the Baltic had disappeared. In January 1920 the GNS was experiencing a severe shortage of space for storing wagons for the herring caught at Peterhead and Fraserburgh because of congestion at Maud Junction and elsewhere. It therefore suggested using the now out-of-use Airfield Sidings at Longside, which would take about 70 vehicles as a temporary store for wagons. The GNS felt it would be of great assistance if it could install an additional crossover to assist with shunting there. Beyond the trestle bridge over the South Ugie Water the line to Lenabo

Royal Naval personnel holding an airship by its mooring lines. (Wikipedia)

was level for about 160 yards after which it was at 1 in 60 for a considerable distance but those 160 yards could safely be used for storage. The company therefore wrote to the newly-created Ministry of Transport (MoT) in February 1920 to suggest that if there were plans to lift the Lenabo Railway then it would like to keep the sidings for its own use.

The Ministry side-stepped the issue, replying that it was not up to them because, until the general question of use of Government-supplied installations by the railway companies had been considered, the. MoT was not in a position to make a decision. In the meantime therefore the railway company should contact the Disposals Board and offer to acquire the sidings. In July 1922 the company did so and offered £200 for the materials but this was rejected as being too little; the Disposals Board then decreed that removal of the material was not to proceed until clearance of the remainder of the Airship Station had been completed at which time the whole railway could then be disposed of.

In October 1922 the airfield demolition had proceed sufficiently for the Disposals people to ask for £600 but in response the GNS said the materials were old anyway and would therefore have deteriorated through lack of use for the previous three years; therefore they were not worth more than £200. On 18th October the company told the Board that they could have been useful to it but now it was no longer interested except at £200 for the materials. The Disposals Commission's official replied "I would infinitely prefer to sell to your Company if I could and as a final endeavour to do business….".

He was not permitted to reduce his figure below £500 but the GNS still said 'no thanks' except at its price. In June 1923, therefore, a tender was issued seeking a contractor to lift and dispose of all the material – the London & North Eastern Railway, which had by then absorbed the GNS, had been asked if it wanted to bid for the contract but it declined. In doing so it was adamant that whoever won the contract could not be allowed to remove the main line connection – only railway employees could do that and they would then hand over the materials recovered to the Disposals Board. The Board would also be required to reinstate the fencing, or pay for it to be reinstated, to all of which it agreed. The track was sold to Thomas W. Ward Ltd. of Sheffield. Had the officials been allowed to be more flexible they could have sold the track and received some money rather than paying for it to be cleared. A case of cutting off one's nose…

In the end not all the buildings were cleared, some simply being left to rot. Much of the site then became a forestry plantation, the trees being felled in the 1960s when they had matured. The remains of the buildings were rediscovered at that time but as they were considered to be unsafe they were demolished and cleared away. Since then the area has reverted to woodland.

A fatal accident

William Patterson was a draper in Peterhead who had only started driving early in 1923 and on 15th August he had gone for a drive with his wife before they had their tea but this short excursion was to cost them their lives. They had been travelling along the public road between Peterhead and Longside village when his car, a small Citröen, was struck and run over by the leading vehicle of a train of fifteen empty wagons which were being propelled along the former airfield railway. They were both thrown out of their car by the impact and Mrs. Patterson was run over by the leading wagon, passing away instantly, while her husband was so seriously injured that he died later the same day. The crash happened about 3.15pm at the level crossing about half a mile from Longside where there were notices warning motorists to 'Beware of the Train'. This did not of course require them to stop, look and listen, simply to go cautiously. The car ended up beneath the first wagon, firmly jammed between the two wheelsets.

Mr. Patterson was assisted by the local doctor who was prepared to take him to the hospital in Aberdeen although it soon became evident that he would not last that long, having told a witness "don't lift me, it's all over with me, I am going now." The news of Mrs. Paterson's death was withheld from her husband.

It was reported locally thus: "Seldom have the hearts of the community been so touched and overclouded as they were on Wednesday on receiving the news of the terrible tragedy which occurred in the afternoon at the Lenabo railway crossing on the Peterhead Longside road and resulted in the death of Mr. and Mrs. Patterson, 33 Prince Street.

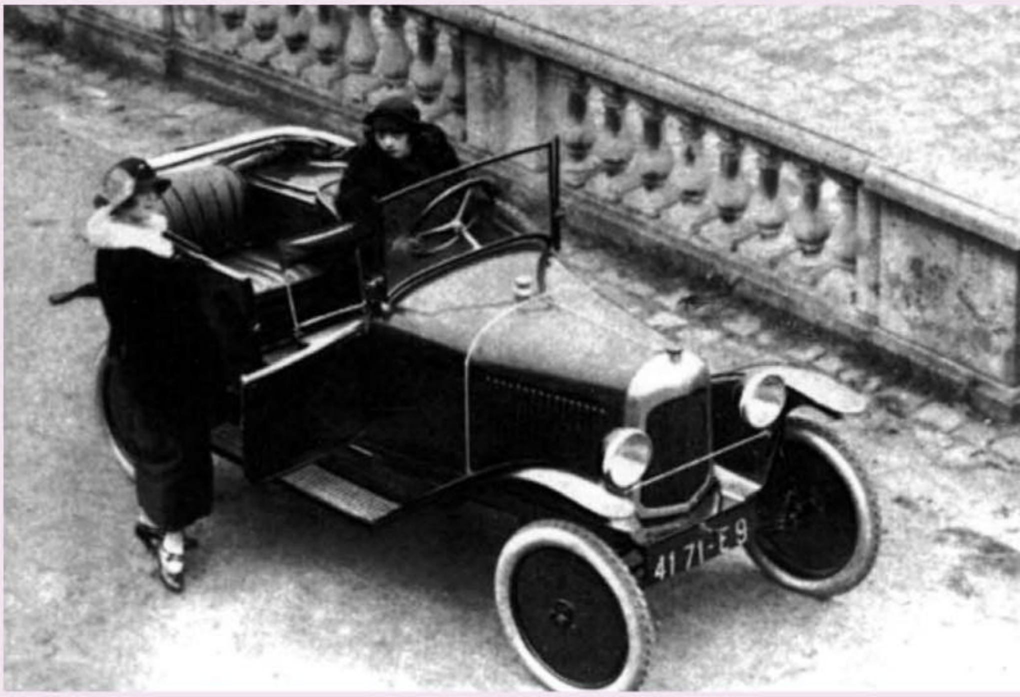
"The crossing is an awkward one on account of the approach of a train from Longside being hidden by a wood from anyone coming from the Peterhead direction; and it appears that when the small Citröen motor car in which Mr. and Mrs. Patterson were riding, was passing between the crossing rails it was caught by the leading trucks of an empty train being driven from the rear and proceeding towards Lenabo. It is understood that the driver of the train blew a warning whistle, which it is presumed Mr. Patterson did not hear... Mrs. Patterson was past aid but her husband, although his injuries were shocking, was still conscious. He died about 20 minutes later".

The Inquiry

The whole sequence of events was considered by Sheriff Laing who held a Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI) in Aberdeen on 26th September, the Procurator Fiscal undertaking the questioning of witnesses. The Patersons' relatives were represented by Mr. Clark Martin, solicitor of Peterhead, while the LNER had an advocate, Robert Adam of Aberdeen, in its corner. The demolition contractor also had the representation of a solicitor. As the first witness the Patterson's son, also William and also a draper, told the Inquiry that his father was a careful driver who "never drove fast", had good eyesight and was a teetotaller. The bulk of the evidence was given by the Longside station master, Alexander Birnie, who had been in charge of the movement of the wagons on the fateful day. He related that the railway was gradually being lifted and removed, the materials going out by rail on an occasional use basis, normally twice a week. The contractors, T. W. Ward, had appointed a sub-contractor to do the actual work although the LNER was separately contracted to provide the locomotive and wagons and to undertake the actual transporting once the wagons had been filled; they generally went to Peterhead for later disposal. After the run-round loop had been lifted the wagons had to be propelled to the worksite from the exchange sidings.

The normal arrangement was that, as on the day of the accident, station master Birnie travelled on the engine and another man, a porter from Longside, rode in the second wagon to act as lookout. Earlier newspaper reports had suggested that he was in the leading wagon but at the Inquiry it was established that he was in the second one. A guard was also part of the crew. Before they set off from Longside Mr. Birnie had instructed the driver to go more cautiously than normal as nothing had been along the line that day. About quarter of a mile from the level crossing the driver had given a long crow on the whistle and did so again when passing the signal post. There was a board here requiring the whistle to be sounded and speed to be limited to 10mph – this would be normal practice at level crossings on any light railway which had been established under the Light Railways Act 1896 although this particular line had come about under the Defence of the Realm Act. The station master estimated that they were doing no more than 4mph at that point; he was keeping a lookout from the right-hand side of the engine.

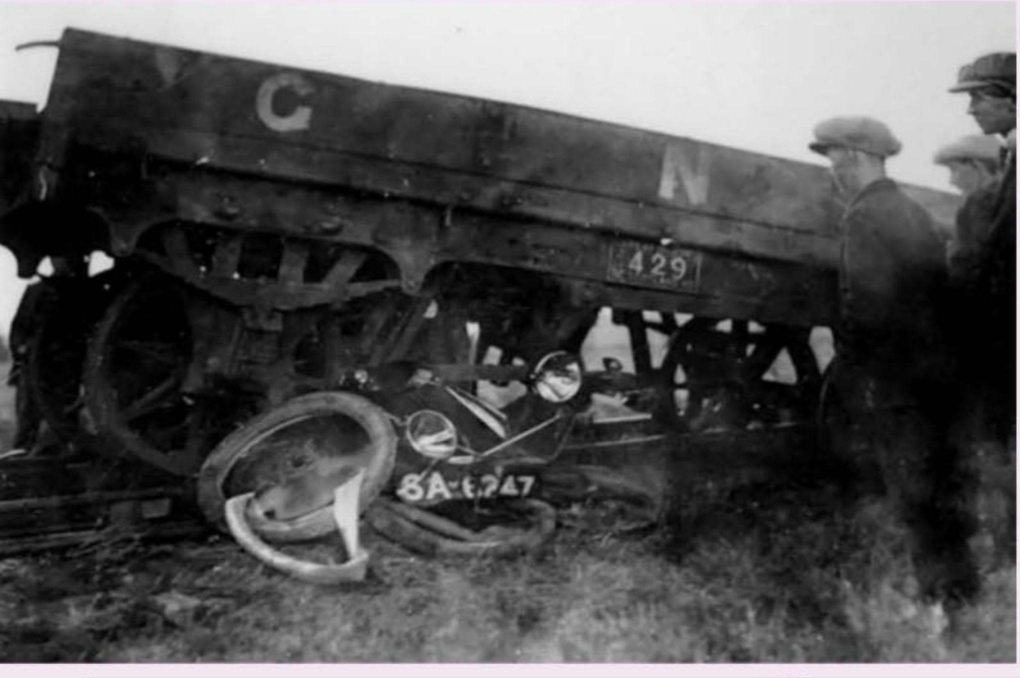
The first he knew that anything was untoward came when the lookout shouted for the driver to stop, which he did immediately although it took 30 to 40 yards for the wagons to come to a complete halt. Birnie alighted and saw that the first wagon had come off the track, having crossed the public road by then. Going forward he found Mrs. Patterson lying across the left rail, the wheels having passed over her chest while Mr. Patterson was on the permanent way but still alive. Five of the wagons had by then passed over the level crossing.



An example of the type of Citröen car being driven by Mr. Patterson. (Wikipedia)

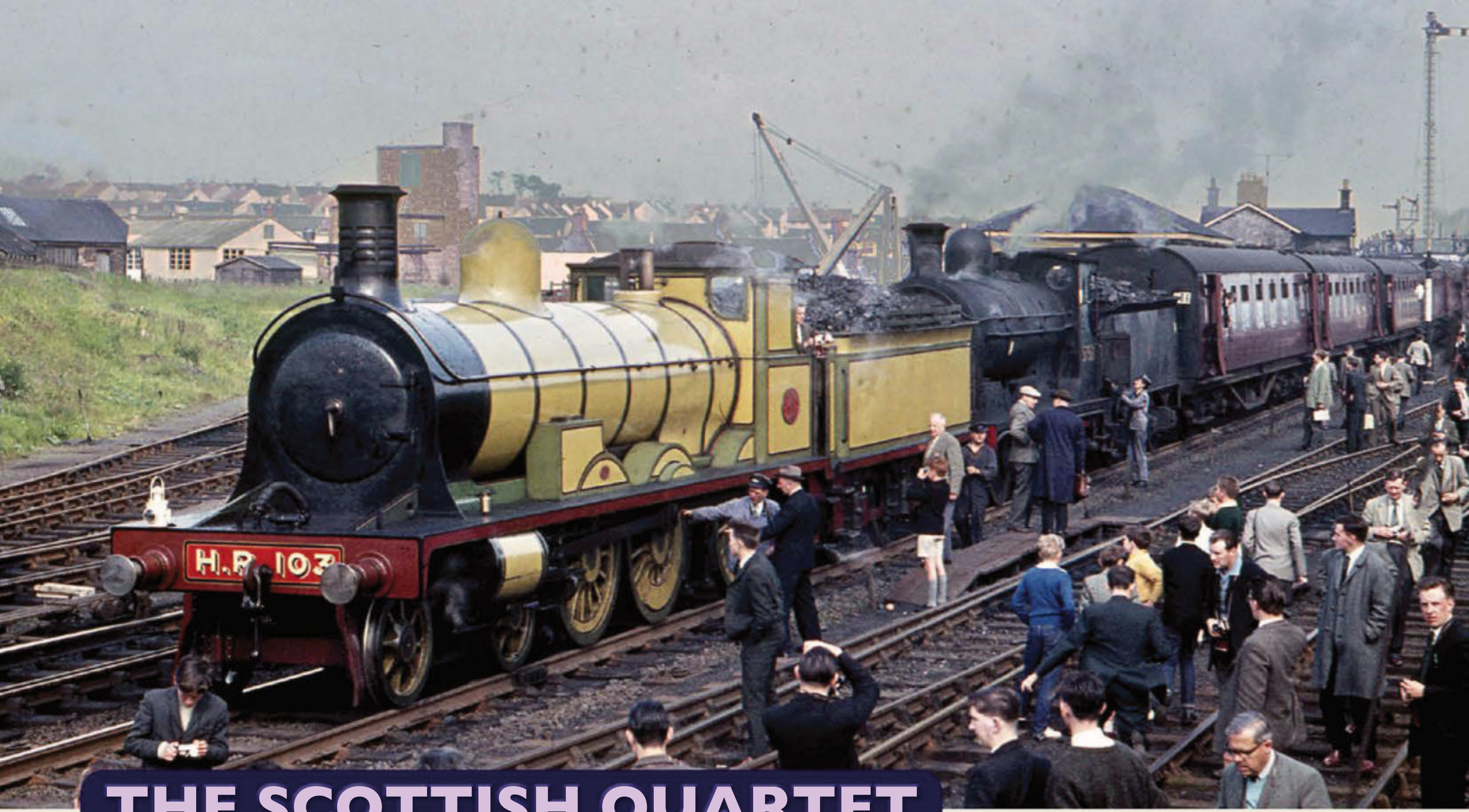
When asked by the Procurator Fiscal for his thoughts on how the accident had happened, Mr. Birnie's reply was that he believed the car driver had disregarded the warning sign on the road ahead of the crossing. He knew that the engine's whistle had been heard almost a mile away and he was certain the motorist should have heard it too. When questioned about protection of the crossing, he responded that it had never been suggested that there should have been a flagman there; perhaps it was not considered necessary taking into account the infrequency of traffic using the railway. The engine driver, George Smith of Peterhead, confirmed all the station master's evidence, including agreeing he had been told to go slower than usual; he explained why this should be, saying that as this was the first trip for a while there could have been sand or stones in the grooves on the crossing which could have led to a derailment while propelling the empty wagons. He had sounded his whistle for about 170 yards. The procedure now that the loop had been lifted was to propel the wagons to the end of the line and leave them there. Had the engine been leading it would have been marooned there for the whole of the next two days while the loading process took place.

Some of the demolition workers look at the remains of the Pattersons' car as it lies crushed beneath the leading wagon.
(Kenny Bruce via the Friends of Maud Station Museum)



Fireman Charles Morris, also of Peterhead, had been keeping a lookout on the opposite side of the engine from Birnie and as the brakes were applied he noticed a motor car some 25 to 30 yards from the crossing. The shunter, Charles McLeod, had seen the motor car approaching, going at about 8mph he estimated, when the leading wagon was only about twenty yards from the crossing – the car driver was looking straight ahead and did not seem to be aware of the presence of the train or the crossing at all. McLeod had not seen the actual collision as he had by then turned to indicate to the driver to stop. Police Inspector William Reid said that Patterson would not have been able to see the wagons until he was within 28 yards of the crossing owing to the existence of a plantation of trees; the car was also very low slung. He suggested that not only was Mr. Patterson a careful driver but also a slow one, perhaps too slow.

The Sheriff was assisted by a jury who, after they had considered all they had heard, returned a formal verdict, saying there had been no criminal negligence on the part of anyone involved. They did, however, add a rider that because the line was used so infrequently, when any traffic did run there ought to have been a man stationed at the crossing to prevent any accidents. Some while after the FAI was over the representatives of the Paterson family claimed compensation from the LNER and this was agreed and paid without contest although not admitting any liability.

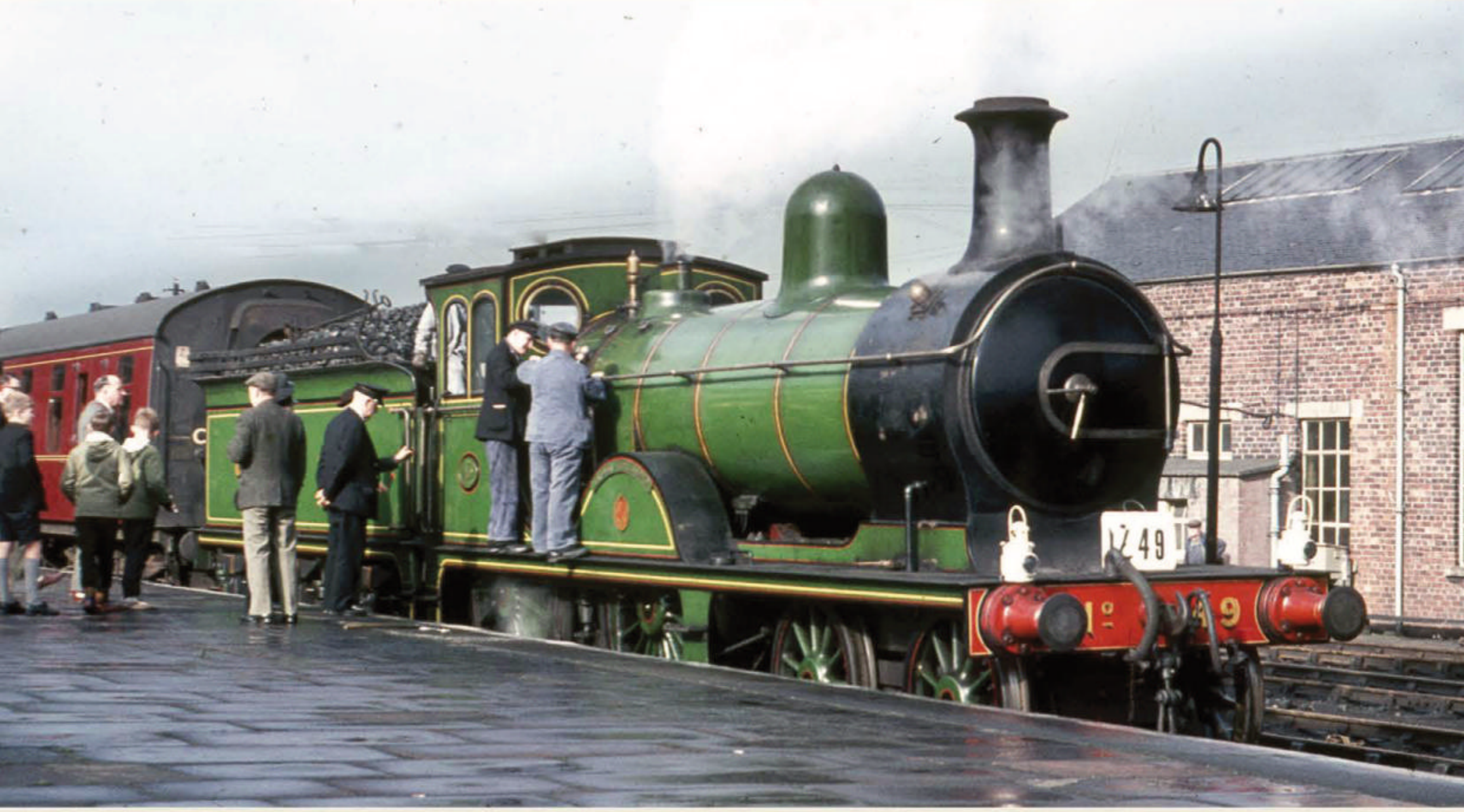


THE SCOTTISH QUARTET

For a period from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s the Scottish Region of British Railways delighted enthusiasts by restoring to working order four historic preserved locomotives from the pre-grouping companies and using them for hauling special trains. These colourful locomotives were photographed on their travels by **GAVIN MORRISON**.

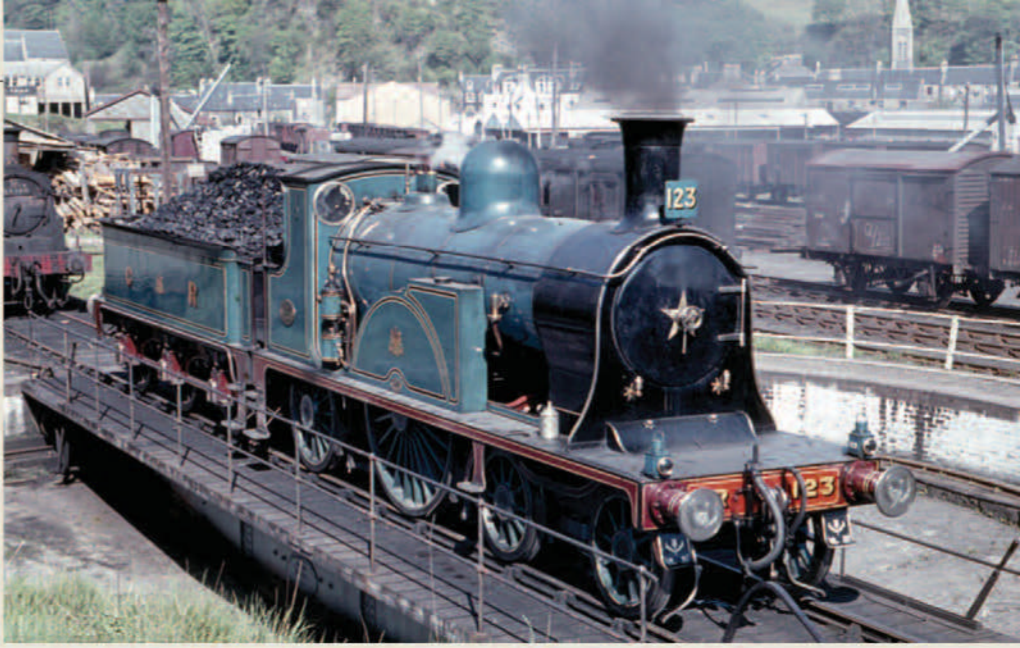
ABOVE: **The most vivid of the Scottish quartet was the Highland Railway 'Jones Goods' 4-6-0 No.103 which had been withdrawn by the LMS in 1934 and laid aside for preservation. Returning to steam in 1959, it appeared in a short-lived HR yellow livery introduced by William Stroudley, though it is a matter of doubt as to whether it actually carried it at all – but it was certainly eye-catching! On 30th June 1963 it was parading at Auchinleck on the Glasgow & South Western main line sharing with Caledonian '812' Class 0-6-0 No.57581 haulage of the 'Three Summits' tour.**

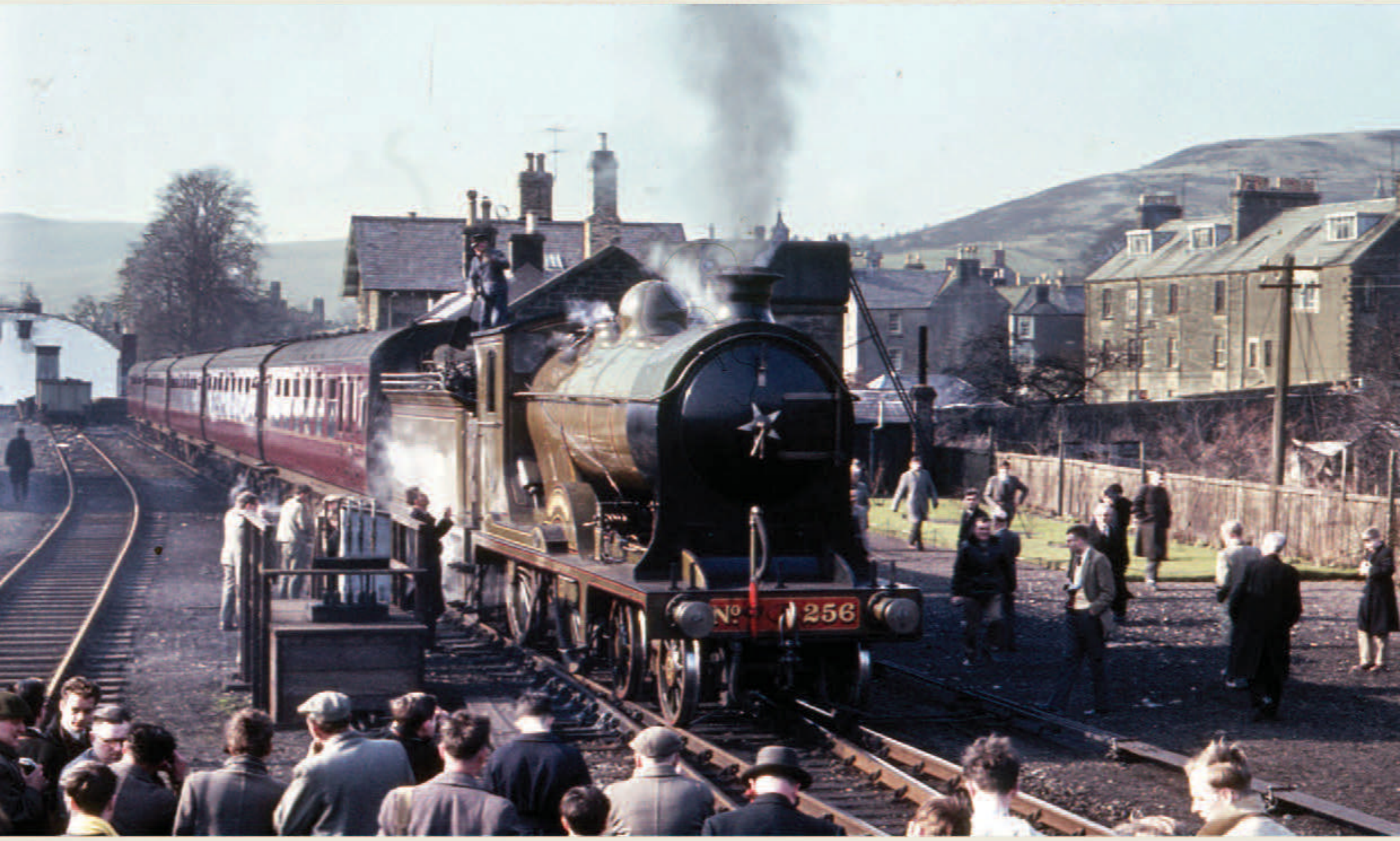
BELOW: **The Great North of Scotland Railway's D40 4-4-0 No.49 *Gordon Highlander* was, following withdrawal, repainted in the company's green livery (though, strictly, black had taken over by 1920 when it was built) and returned to special service. On 16th October 1965 it was at Carstairs station during the course of a Branch Line Society ramble from Glasgow Central and back to St. Enoch.**



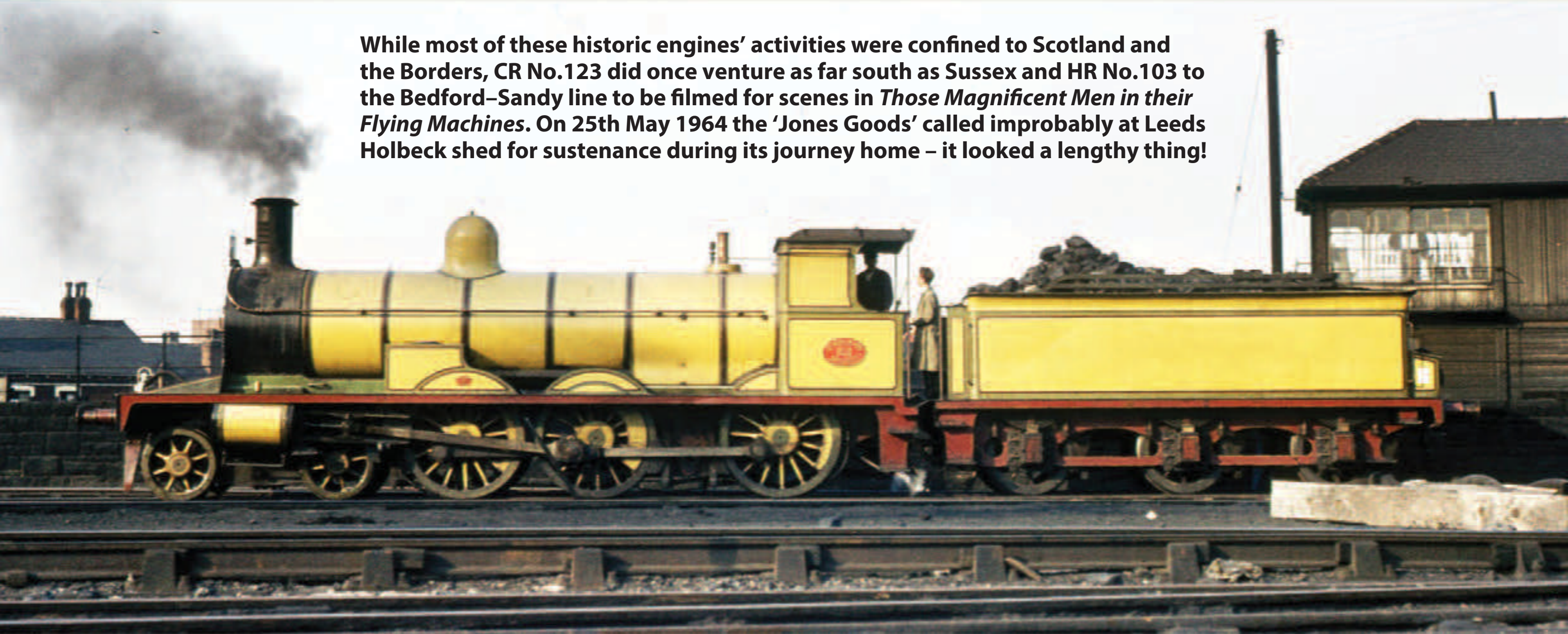
RIGHT: **The glorious Caledonian Railway 4-2-2 No.123 on the turntable at Oban on 12th May 1962. The only 4-2-2 to run in Scotland, it was built in 1886 for display at the Edinburgh International Exhibition and participated with gusto in the 1888 'Railway Races to the North'. Withdrawn in 1935, No.123 was returned to working order in 1958.**

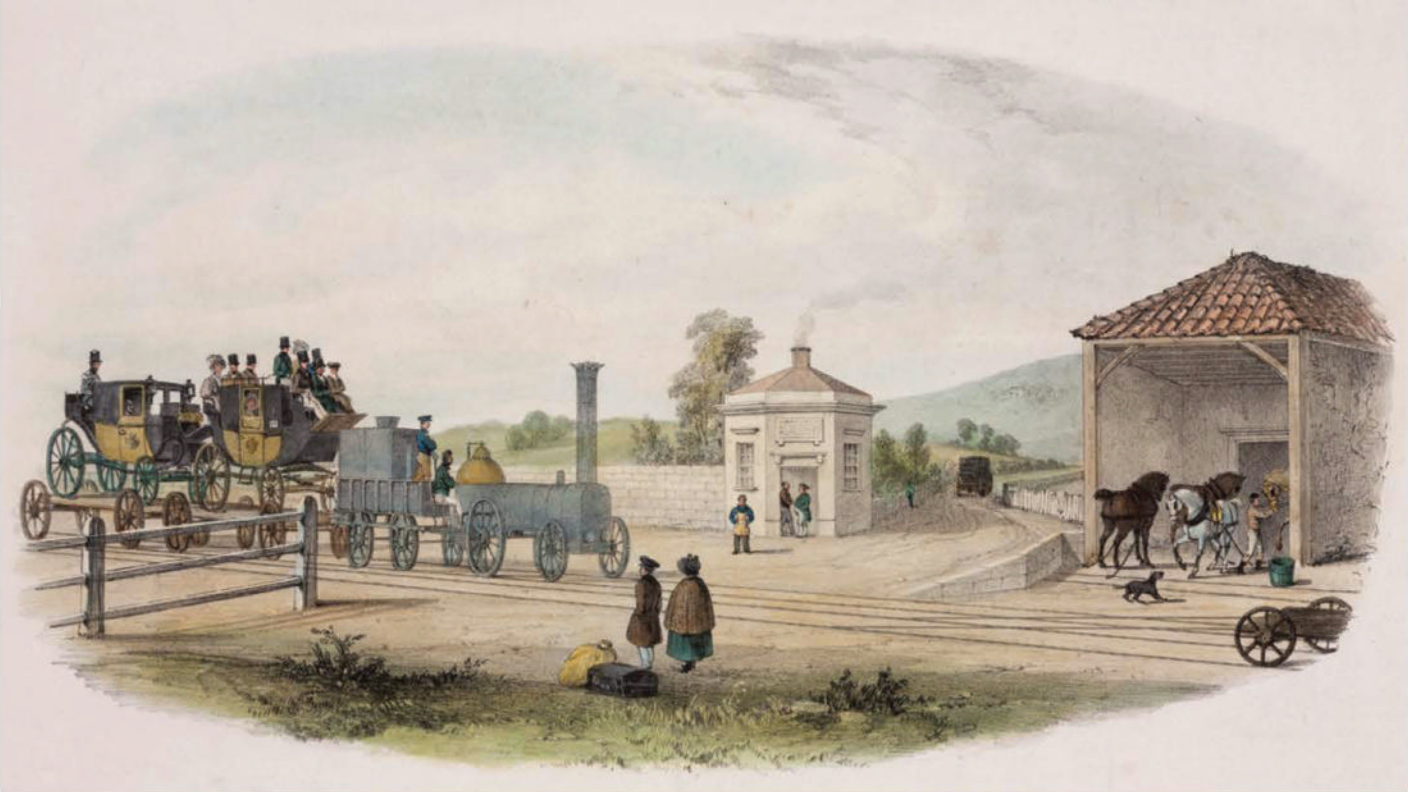
BELOW: **The North British Railway D34 'Glen' Class originated in 1913 for working over the difficult gradients of the West Highland line. No.256 *Glen Douglas* was returned to company colours in 1958 and is seen here at the Langholm branch terminus while on a Stephenson and Manchester Locomotive Societies tour around the Carlisle area on 6th April 1963.**





While most of these historic engines' activities were confined to Scotland and the Borders, CR No.123 did once venture as far south as Sussex and HR No.103 to the Bedford–Sandy line to be filmed for scenes in *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*. On 25th May 1964 the 'Jones Goods' called improbably at Leeds Holbeck shed for sustenance during its journey home – it looked a lengthy thing!





This image contains a unique depiction of a stagecoach fully loaded with passengers on a carriage truck. All the accoutrements of a hand-over between road and rail are present, the horses in the stable are even readied and harnessed. A partial depiction of a spare carriage truck appears to the right and a small wall to the left of the stable, up to which a siding runs, could pass for an early form of unloading point. While titled Abingdon Road Station (Oxfordshire), 1844, now known as Culham, the similarity ends there. Colin Taylor of the Culham Ticket Office suggested it might represent the temporary location known as Abingdon Road Crossing, which was necessary due to the rebuilding of a failed overbridge, where the railway instead crossed the road on the level. (courtesy of the Science Museum)

THE DECADE OF STAGE AND MAIL

STAGECOACHES COMPLETED PARTS O

BY TOM NICHOLLS

For a short time, mainly between 1837-1846, before the railway network was complete coach proprietors and the Post Office loaded their stage and mail carriages, including, on occasions, their travellers, on to railway trucks for parts of their journeys. This occurred where the rail route had partially but not completely encroached on the road route. These hybrid journeys, part road and part rail, are a little known feature of the early years of the railway network.

While some journeys involved moving passenger and luggage from the coach to the railway carriage others (and the focus of this article) actually involved the hoisting of the entire assemblage on to the carriage truck. In some other cases, rather sensibly, stagecoach passengers were advised to ride in the railway coaches and abandon their road conveyance for the duration of the railway journey but there were plenty of examples where they were not.

The replacement of road coaches by rail was an inevitable transition where there were railways. Yet for the transition years, while the rail network was 'skeletal' and still missing plenty of bones, a number of coach proprietors made arrangements with railways and found it expedient to simply 'piggy back' the carriage on the railway truck rather than to transfer the luggage and passengers to the coach.

Many coaches from the furthest destinations simply truncated their routes at the new railhead, meeting the train at its end destination. These coach proprietors also offered the public through-tickets, including the rail portion of the journey. This marketing by coach proprietors of a seamless transition between road and rail, with the added convenience of buying through tickets etc., was part of their efforts to live with the impact of the railways.[1] This was also true of coaches that made hybrid journeys where the coach was placed on a railway truck. These coaches were still advertised as going to London *but by the railway.*

The forward-thinking Post Office did much to utilise the advantage of railways. As rail replaced road at the end of the 1830s, for the Post Office it was a matter of efficiency. Mail proprietors found themselves increasingly reduced to providing local pick-ups from railway stations, rather than facilitating long-distance road mail routes. The grand and resplendent mail coaches became increasingly redundant. As the rail network replaced the long-distance road network, post proprietors became increasingly local or regional agents for the post, as the railways took over the responsibility for delivering the mail.

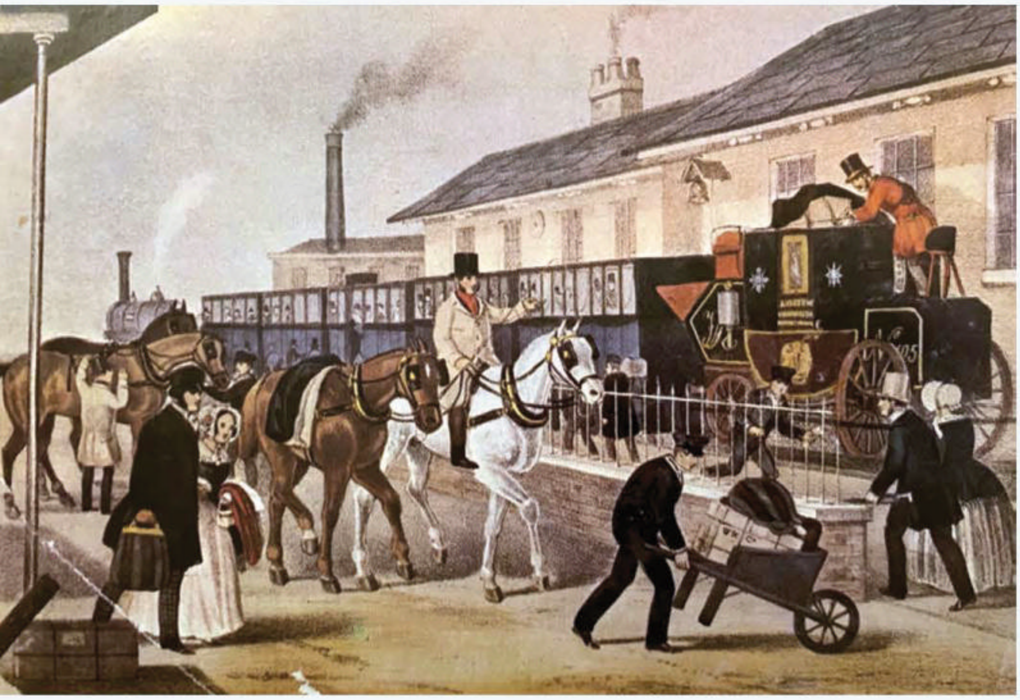
The Liverpool & Manchester Railway (L&MR) had already proved the ability of railways to carry mail[2] and originated the first railway mail coach.[3] However, the railway itself had little impact on the mail coach network centred and radiating outwards as the routes were around London. The opening of the Grand Junction was another matter.

"The opening of the Grand Junction Railway will cause very great changes in the Post Office communication between London and the North of England and Scotland. Until the London and Birmingham Rail road shall be completed, it is, we understand, arranged that there shall be two mails despatched from London for Liverpool and the North, namely, a morning and an evening mail: the first will reach Birmingham at six o'clock in the evening, and the second at six in the morning, the bags will be forwarded by the railroad, and reach Liverpool, the first at midnight, and the second at noon next day. (…) The mails to Glasgow and Edinburgh will, by means of the new railroad, be accelerated half-a-day; and the intermediate towns on the north road will share in the earlier arrival of letters and intelligence."[4]

The launching of the 'Birmingham, Chester and Holyhead day mail' by the London Coach proprietors Edward Sherman & Co. gives us an example of a hybrid route but one without 'piggy backing'. The Mail coach left London's coaching inn, The Bull & Mouth, at 8.00am, arrived at Birmingham at 6.00 in the evening, "From thence the passengers & bags will be forwarded immediately by railway to Hartford (…) A mail-coach will wait there for the arrival of the train."[5]

All did not go well, however, and Robert Wallace, the famous Law and Post Office reformer and Scottish MP, was required to investigate some early issues on the GJR, with regard to the late delivery of mails. [6]

The GJR's partner in its route to London, the London & Birmingham Railway (L&BR), didn't carry mail until 1838. The delay in the completion of Kilsby Tunnel meant that the line still had a gap between Denbigh Hall and Rugby. "The mails to Holyhead, Manchester, Liverpool, and Carlisle were despatched on Tuesday night for the first time by the London and Birmingham Railway. The coaches are drawn by horses to the terminus at Euston Square, and there are placed on trucks, and so run on the railway, retaining their coachmen, guards, passengers, &c. &c, and



The Louth Mail, a subject of a number of 'mail coach' paintings, skirted the Lincolnshire Wolds and followed the east coast, around the Wash, down to Boston and Peterborough. This image, sometimes referred to as the 'Last of the Coaches' is very interesting, as it shows the Louth Mail 'piggy backed' on carriage trucks at Peterborough East station. Another version of this scene is depicted in a painting by James Pollard. Peterborough East was demolished in 1972 but a part of the old L&B branch provides the home of the Nene Valley Railway. (With permission from the Archive, Postal Museum, Object 2009-0071)

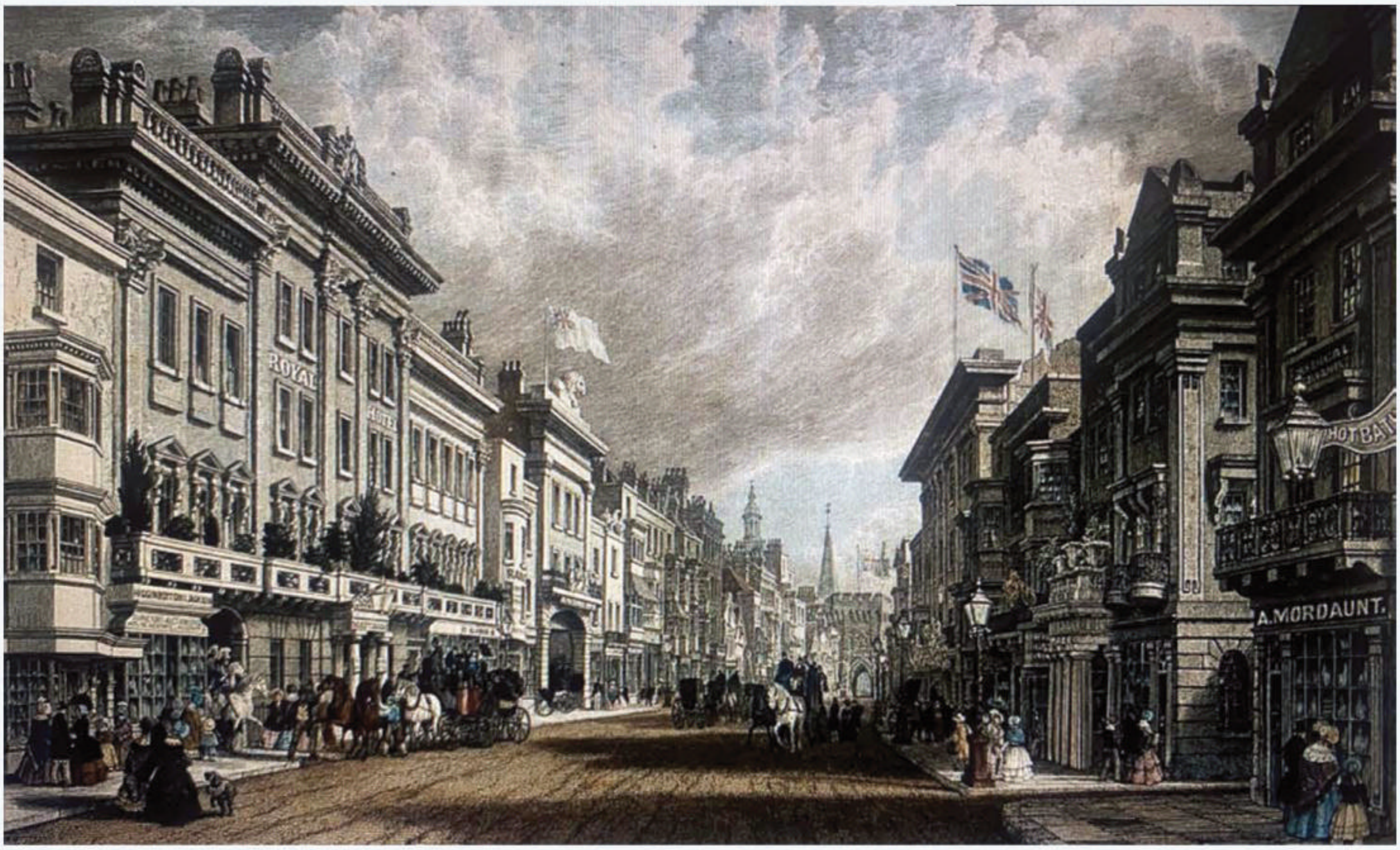
COACH 'PIGGY-BACKING' WHEN F THEIR JOURNEY 'ON THE RAILWAY'

only requiring horses when they reach the end of the railway, to proceed on their respective destinations. Despatching these four miles by this conveyance accelerates the arrival of letters, to a great part of the North of England and Scotland by, we believe, about two hours."[7]

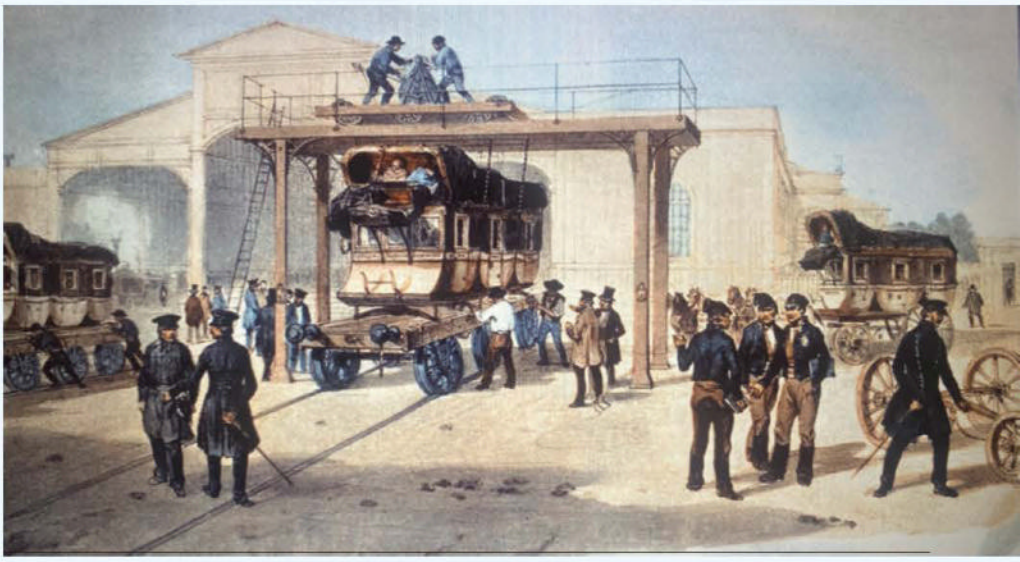
The L&BR minutes tell us that these mail carriages were provided by the coach proprietor William James Chaplin,[8] who was successful in adapting his coaching interests to work with the railways, who along with his friend, the great Manchester coach proprietor Henry Charles Lacy, became directors of the London & South Western, amongst many other concerns.

A fascinating letter exists in the Postal Archives from Secretary Col. William Maberly. Maberly visited the London & Birmingham's temporary station at Denbigh Hall on 14th of May 1838 in order to report on the arrangements for the Post Office. The reason given for the 'piggy backing' of the Mail Coaches was a concern that unloading passengers and luggage in the dark would be dangerous and mailbags could be damaged. He thus concludes that the matter of "passengers in the dead of night and their luggage being transferred is of so very serious a nature that it might be avoided". Passengers and luggage would thus remain in their mail carriages and be unloaded with them still on board the coach.[9] He arranged to meet Chaplin the next day to discuss what rates should be charged for the mail coaches travelling on 'trucks'.[10] For some years Euston was the point of all

Matcham and Curtis ran carriages to London from the Royal Hotel in Southampton, seen here on the left. In 1839 they ran part of the way to London and then were loaded on a London & Southampton train at Shapley Heath (now Winchfield), passengers included. This continued even when the only gap on the line was between Basingstoke and Winchester. Latterly the passengers sat in the carriages while the guard of the stagecoach hand guarded the luggage. I imagine the coaches ceased in May of 1840 when the London & Southampton opened throughout.



mail travelling North. The 'York mail', it was anticipated, would travel via a junction on the L&BR over the Midland lines.[11] The Post Office went so far as to check the clearances of North Midland bridges ensuring that the piggy-backed mail coaches inclusive of a seated Mail guard and stovepipe hat could pass under.[12] However, by 1840, when the Midland lines connected with the London & Birmingham, the use of the Travelling Post Office and baggage tenders was firmly established. Nevertheless, 'piggy-backing' of mail coaches did continue elsewhere.



A French form of coach body-swapping between road and rail was invented by Jean-Claude Arnoux and went into use between Paris and Orléans in 1843. Arnoux actually developed wagons to specifically fit the bodies of this French form of stagecoach. The stagecoaches of Laffitte and Gaillard loaded at the Paris pier were put back on wheels in Orléans. I have discovered, to my surprise, that not only did the passengers ride in the bodies of the 'Diligence' carriages on a specially made rail wagon but they were actually lifted while remaining within. (After a lithograph by Bayot)

William Chaplin also operated stagecoaches between London & Birmingham, as well as mail coaches, which in 1838 were either sent onwards by road from Denbigh Hall to Birmingham or retook the rails at Rugby, as did the Mail coaches we have just mentioned. One carriage that did this was called 'The Estafette'.

"An accident of a peculiar nature occurred on the London and Birmingham Railway, about one mile on this side of Denbigh Hall. Previous to the starting of the Birmingham mail train from the station in Euston Grove, it was discovered that three soldiers were in the 'Estafette' Birmingham coach, which is conveyed by the train, they having paid their fares by that conveyance. By order of the railway superintendent they were removed from their position to one of the second class open carriages, when it was ascertained that they were rather intoxicated, having been paid off from their regiments that day. The train started, and on its arrival within about mile of Denbigh Hall, one of the men, named James Tiernan, having observed what he imagined was a public house, declared with oath that he would not go a step further without something to drink, at the same time (whilst the train was at full speed) he sprang from the carriage into the road. It being nearly dark he was not missed at the time, but on the arrival of the train at Denbigh Hall his companions made known the circumstance, on which some of the officers of the company were despatched to the spot, where they discovered the man lying on his back, and on examination found that the whole of his toes, boots and all, had been cut off by the train. Notwithstanding this, the unfortunate man on being roused got up, and persisted walking with them to Denbigh Hall, which feat he accomplished without the slightest apparent pain. On his arrival, however, at that place he complained of violent pain in his feet and legs, and it was not until medical aid was called in that he became fully sensible of what had befallen him. He was placed on some straw in a stable, and, having had his feet dressed, remained there that night, and was conveyed to his destination at Birmingham."[13] A narrow escape but sadly not one without consequence.

The L&BR wasn't the only railway to work with stagecoaches in this way. Our next example is from the London & Southampton Railway (L&SR): On 7th June 1839 Messrs. Matcham and Curtis "placed a carriage on the Railroad". The London & Southampton Railway line was already opened as far as Shapley Heath (now Winchfield) "which had had the effect of bringing the majority of the coaches running to the south west and west of England to that station". Then on 10th June 1839 the line was formally opened from Shapley Heath to Basingstoke and from Winchester to Northam Road, just short of the Southampton terminus. The coach will "leave Southampton every morning, at half past seven o'clock precisely, by the first morning train from the terminus at the Northam Road. The same coach will also leave London every morning at have past seven".[14]

Matcham & Curtis's New Coach did one better than the road coaches which plied the gap between Basingstoke and Winchester, by travelling the whole distance, albeit loaded on a carriage truck for the rail segment.

Concerns for their luggage might well have been one of the reasons that passengers of 'piggy-backed' stagecoaches did not want to quit their carriages. On 6th July 1839 W. Hall and T. Gardiner, who appear to be acting as ticket agents, assured the public that, while the 'Independent' coach was partially removed from the road, a reference to the coach travelling part of the route on a railway carriage truck, "every particle of luggage will remain on the coach, in charge of the coachman, and the passengers are only required to ride in the railway carriages to and from London and Basingstoke, and the remainder of the journey conducted as before".[15] There was one hiccup when due to some subsidence the train was derailed. "No person was injured; but the stage-coaches conveyed by the train were left behind."[16]

On the Eastern Counties Railway, at Brentwood, "At seven o clock a train consisting of four first class carriages, two second-rate, and two third-rate, with two trucks, upon which were placed two stagecoaches – namely, the 'Norwich Times' and the Colchester 'Defiance'. On arriving within about 150 yards from a place called Pullwell's-gate, a most excellent part of the road, and about two miles from Brentwood, the train began to warp in a manner that satisfied most of the passengers that an accident was inevitable, and in a moment afterwards their worst apprehensions were realised. The engine shot off the rail and rushed down a declivity on the eastern side of the road of about 10 feet, but before reaching the bottom it turned right over, carrying with it the whole of the carriages upon the train with the exception of the two stage-coaches before mentioned, which, with the tracks upon which they were placed, remained on the bank."[17]

"In 1824, the year in which the prospectus for a railway from Bristol to Bath was first issued, a coach which started from the White Lion, Bath, which stood in the High Street where the Secondary School now exists, was timed to make the journey between London and Bath in twelve hours. The Great Western Railway was eventually opened from there to Maidenhead on June 4th. Soon afterwards the first coach was conveyed by rail between Maidenhead and Paddington. Among the coaches thus conveyed were the 'Beaufort', which started from the White Lion Hotel, the York House Hotel coaches, and Cooper's 'Day Coach', which ran to and from the Christopher Hotel, Bath. The 'Night Coach' run by this proprietor soon followed suit. For time the York House Hotel coaches were improved in their timing, the hope of competing with the railways, and an effort was made to cover the distance between London and Bath in ten hours. However, by 1840, when the Great Western Railway was opened to Reading, York House Coach was transferred to the railway and conveyed to London from that point. By 31st May 1841 the line had opened as far Chippenham. The section of line from there to Bristol was opened on August 31st 1840."[19] The portion between Chippenham and Bath was the last to be opened, thus completing direct rail communication between Bristol and London.

J. Pratt grandiosely advertised his General Coach and Railway Office at Old London Inn, Exeter, in 1840. His coach 'The Telegraph' must have travelled 'piggy-back' for at least part of the journey on the Great Western, running from the Bull & Mouth, Regent's Circus, Piccadilly, as it is described as "avoiding the unpleasantness of shifting

Luggage" since it was the "same Coach and Guard throughout". Outside passengers on Cockram's 'Royal Exeter' fast Night Coach, 1842, at least got to travel in a covered second class carriage from Bridgewater, which had opened a year earlier, this presumably where the coach was mounted on to the carriage truck for the journey to London.[20]

A candidate for the most famous 'piggy-back' scene which appears to be an aquatint, later captured in oil, is that of the Louth Mail being piggybacked on to a London & Birmingham train at Peterborough East station. The situation in 1845 was actually quite complicated. The station had been built by the Eastern Counties but it was the L&BR/London & North Western Railway which reached it first and connected via its Northampton line. Louth is situated to the east of Lincoln, the path of the coach was somewhat coastal and so the railway at Peterborough served as a suitable railhead.[21] The *Cambridge Independent* states "It is now currently reported that on and after the 22nd of this month the Louth as well as the Lincoln mail is to run to the Peterborough Station, from thence conveyed to rail London."[22]

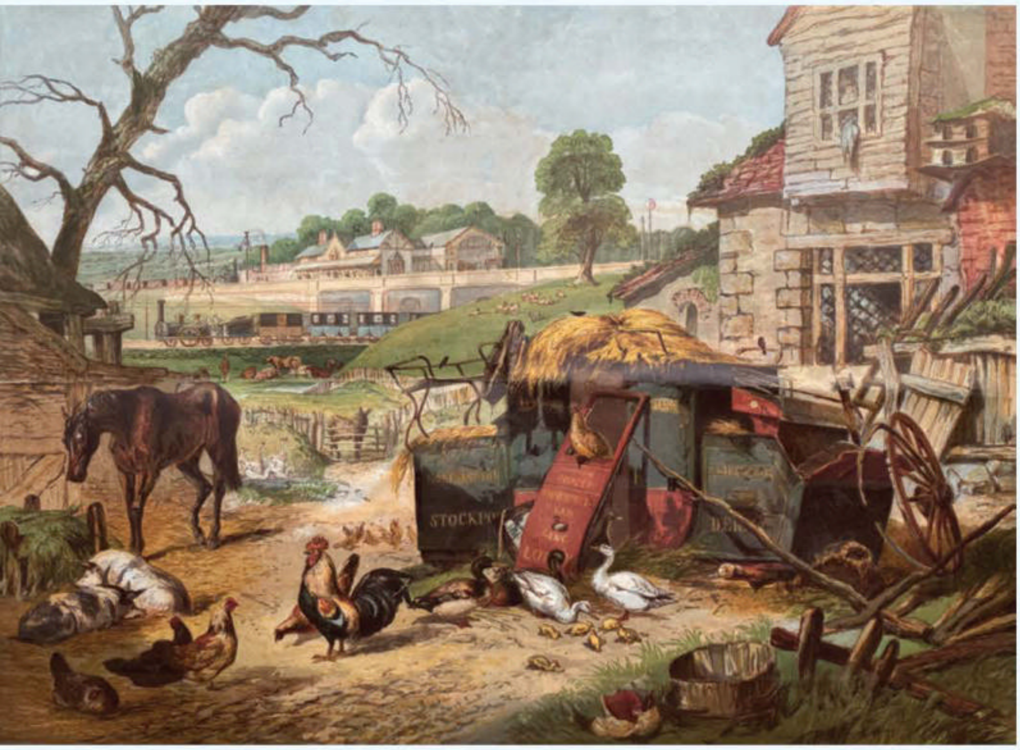
A French form of coach body swapping between road and rail was invented by Jean-Claude Arnoux and went into use between Paris and Orleans in 1843. The stagecoaches or 'Diligences' of Laffitte and Gaillard were loaded at Paris and were put back on wheels in Orléans and it seems this happened with the passengers remaining on board. Ernest Deharme, writing in the 1880s, gives a glimpse of this scene in the early 1840s in France.

He describes 'Diligences' being carried on railway flat wagons[23] "but the wheels of the latter are removed on departure and put back on arrival. This transport has lost much of the importance it had during the early days of the railways, when there were still many gaps in the railway network.

"I remember the emotions I felt when I arrived under the crane responsible for removing the heavy vehicle, and everyone said to themselves: 'What if one of the chains broke!' Once separated from its axles, the stagecoach was carried sideways by the travelling winch to which it was suspended, then lowered back on to the wagon which was to carry it. On arrival, it was a reverse manoeuvre. The chains did not break, but the creaks they made as they rolled up or unwound contributed in no small measure to the fears people had at that time about travelling by rail."[24]

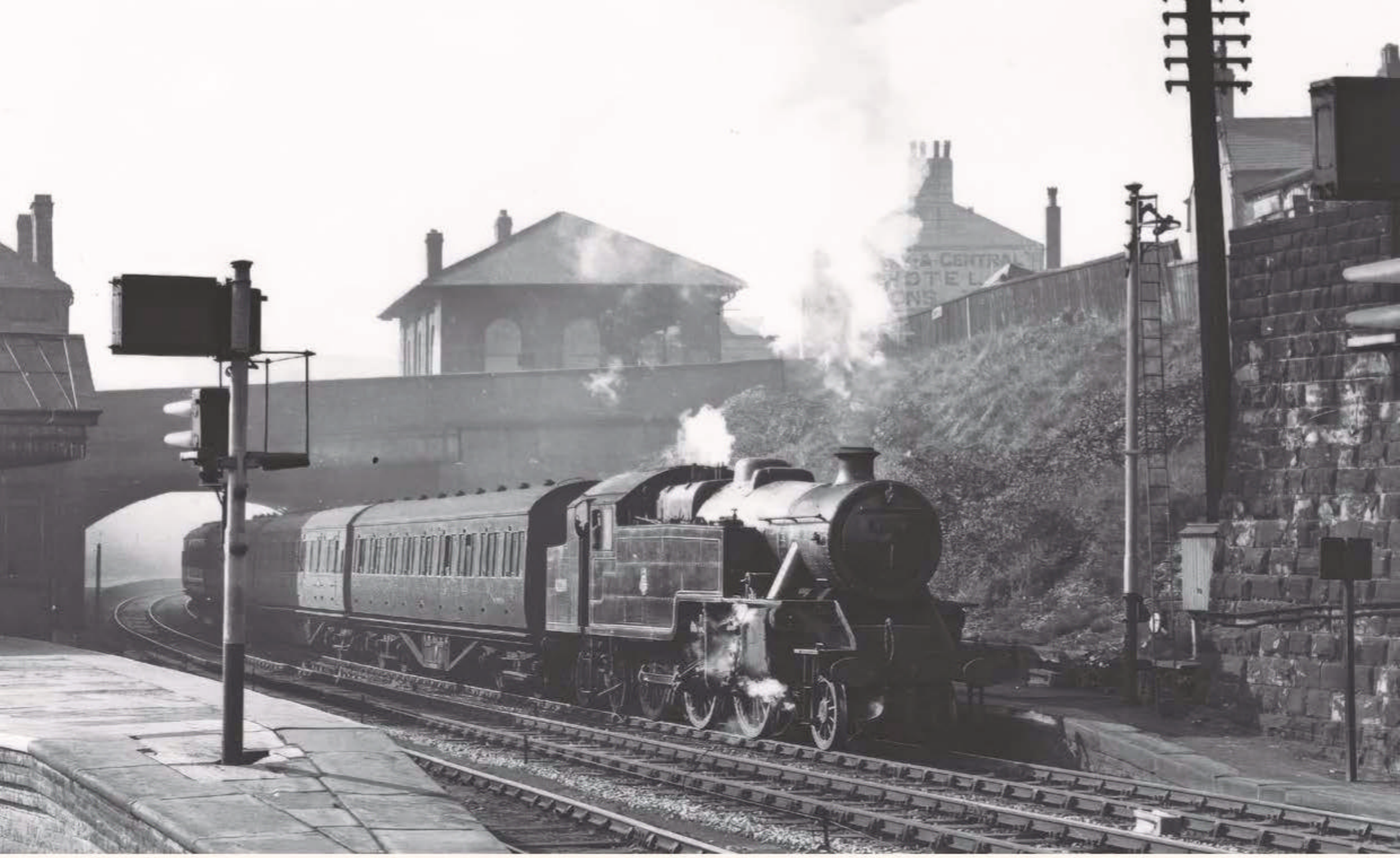
The thoughts of Ernest must have echoed the fears of many a passenger who travelled in the way described in this article. Just as the rise of the TPOs and mail trains decimated the mail coach network, so did long-distance stagecoaches fall to the ordinary passenger train but for a brief window in time when the two combined.

By around 1850, completion of the rail network had relegated almost all long-distance coaches to history. Some survived as cross-country coaches but particularly the road mailcoach system of the 1780s had been gradually eroded by the developing rail Post Office and the TPO network. Horses were still in demand to haul passengers (more often in omnibuses), mail, parcels and goods away from stations to towns and residences. Many bemoaned the end of the Golden Coaching Age, perhaps in the same way we mourned the end of steam; what horses felt about the matter is not recorded. This image titled 'Past & Present', shows the body of Willam Chaplin's Manchester Mail, of the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane, derelict but still bearing the motto 'defiance'. The names of towns along the route echoes of its glory past. Irony in the choice of coach proprietor since Chaplin switched his business interests entirely to railways, becoming Deputy Chairman of the London & Southampton and Chairman of the LSWR. By the time of his death his coaching days had been deleted from his achievements. This version by Leighton Bros. 1845. (Author's Collection)



References

1. A number of coaches can be found in the press at this time being named the 'railway', instead of the traditional names, such as 'Quicksilver' and 'Telegraph' etc.
2. Between 1830 and 1836 none of the railways of this period constituted trunk lines so effectively where mail was carried by the railways it only replaced a stage rather than a route.
3. The L&MR built some exclusive carriages that were a combination of the traditional mail coach, seen as a cut above the Stagecoach, and a railway carriage with an armed mail guard employed by the Post Office. This railway mail coach idea continued until it was superseded c1840 by 'travelling post offices' and 'baggage tenders'. The 'mail coach' influence on carriage designs lasts some years longer, however.
4. 'Grand Junction Railway – The London & Birmingham Mail', *Liverpool Mercury* - Friday 9th June 1837, p.3
5. From the *Times* the previous Tuesday, *Leeds Intelligencer* - Saturday 9th September 1837
6. Perhaps related to early traction issues.
7. 'Alteration in the mails and railway trains', *Staffordshire Advertise*r - Saturday 26th May 1838, p.3
8. See para. below Min. 739, letter read 17th May 1838, London & Birmingham Railway, Committee of Management meeting minutes, 1838 Mar.-1838 June - TNA RAIL 384/86
9. The London & Birmingham and Grand Junction had designed and built expensive railway carriages expressly for the conveyance of higher class passengers and mail bags. This model of a railway carriage carrying mail bags in an Imperial on its roof, and passengers within would be short lived.
10. POST 11/61. The Royal Mail archive, Papers relating to alteration of the London and Holyhead mail service following the partial opening of the London and Birmingham railway, 1838.
11. The original letter is at the NRM, however a digital copy is held by the Midland Railway Study Centre, reference 99-0425
12. The original letter is at the NRM, however, a digital copy is held by the Midland Railway Study Centre, reference 99-0425
13. 'Singular occurrence on the Birmingham Railway' - *Coventry Herald* - Friday 7thSeptember 1838, p.4
14. New coach on the Railway' - *Hampshire Independent* - Saturday 15th June 1839, p.2.
15. 'Southampton & London – Independent Coach by Railway' - *Hampshire Independent* - Saturday 6th July 1839, p1
16. 'Accident on the Southampton Railway' - *The Champion* - Sunday 1st December 1839
17. 'Frightful and fatal accident upon the Eastern Counties Railway' - *Derby Mercury* - Wednesday 26th August 1840
18. 'FROM Stagecoach TO RAILWAY. Bath's Communications' - *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - Saturday 30th January 1926, p.14
19. New Day Coaches, From Pratt's Old London Inn, *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser* - Friday 28th August 1840 p1
20. London Inn. Royal Mail and Coach establishment. *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* - Saturday 16th July 1842 p1
21. One a painting by James Pollard, the other a hand coloured print, possibly the work of the engraver R.G. Reeve, based on Pollard's original. Although titled 'Last of the Coaches' (Postal Archive POST 118/6280), the last London based mail coach was in fact the Norwich mail, 6th January 1846.
22. 'Mail Coach Alterations.'— *Cambridge Independent Press* - Saturday 27 December 1845, p.3
23. A specific design by Jean-Claud Arnoux
24 "Les Merveilles de la Locomotion" de Ernest Deharme. Ingenieur et charge d'etudes a la Direction des Chemins de fer du Midi" (1888)



Oldham Central ABOVE
A run- of- the- mill scene in most northern towns. LMS Fairburn Class 4MT 2-6-4T No.42289, in sparkling condition, leaves Oldham Central station with a local service from Manchester Victoria to Rochdale in April 1957. The semaphore signals have just been superseded by colour lights. (Jim Davenport)

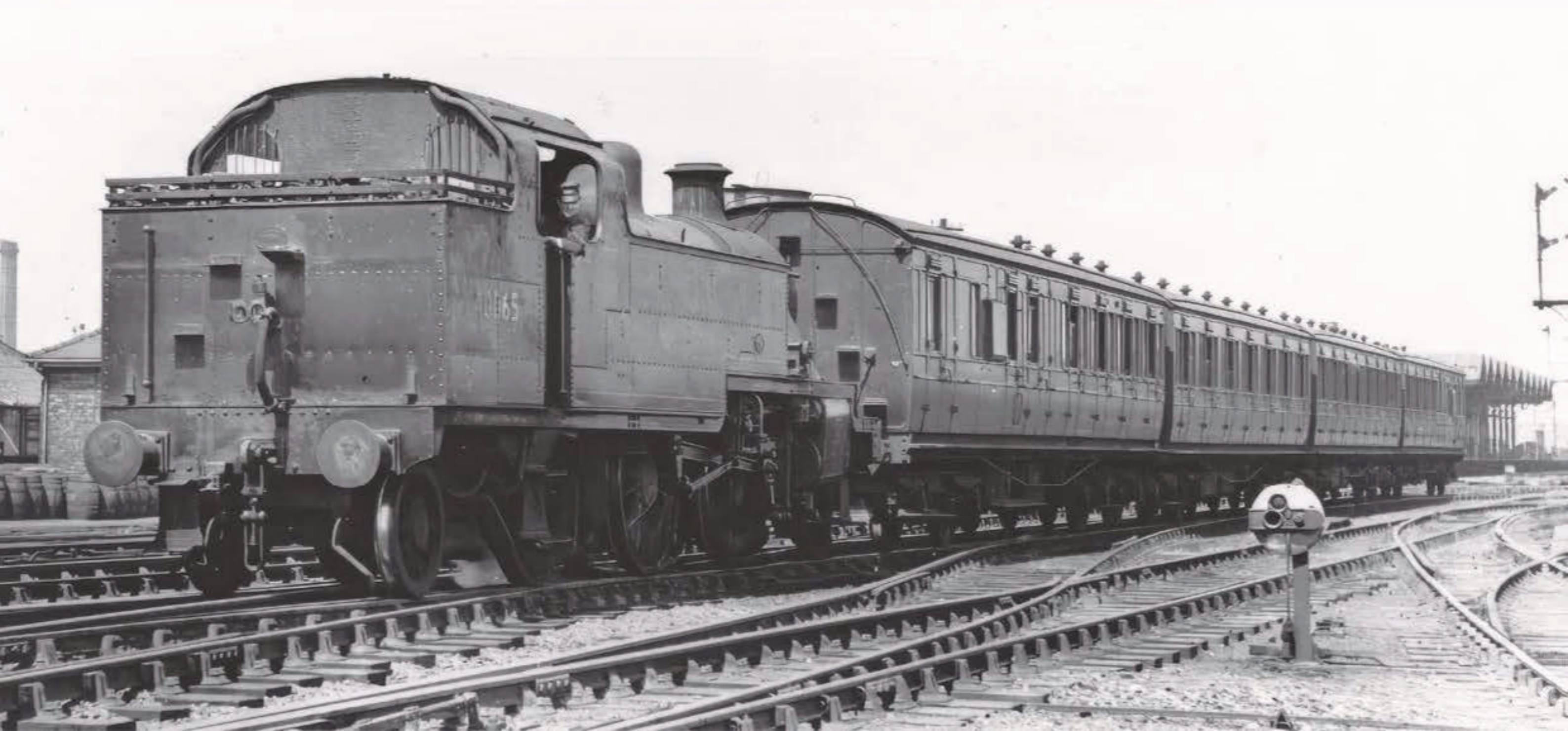
Middleton Junction BELOW
A four-coach passenger train leaves Middleton Junction station, which can be glimpsed beyond the last carriage, bound for Manchester Victoria sometime in the 1950s. Fowler Class 3MT 2-6-2T No.40065 heads for the city bunker first, an easy journey down gradient, without a hint of smoke and steam. (Jim Davenport)

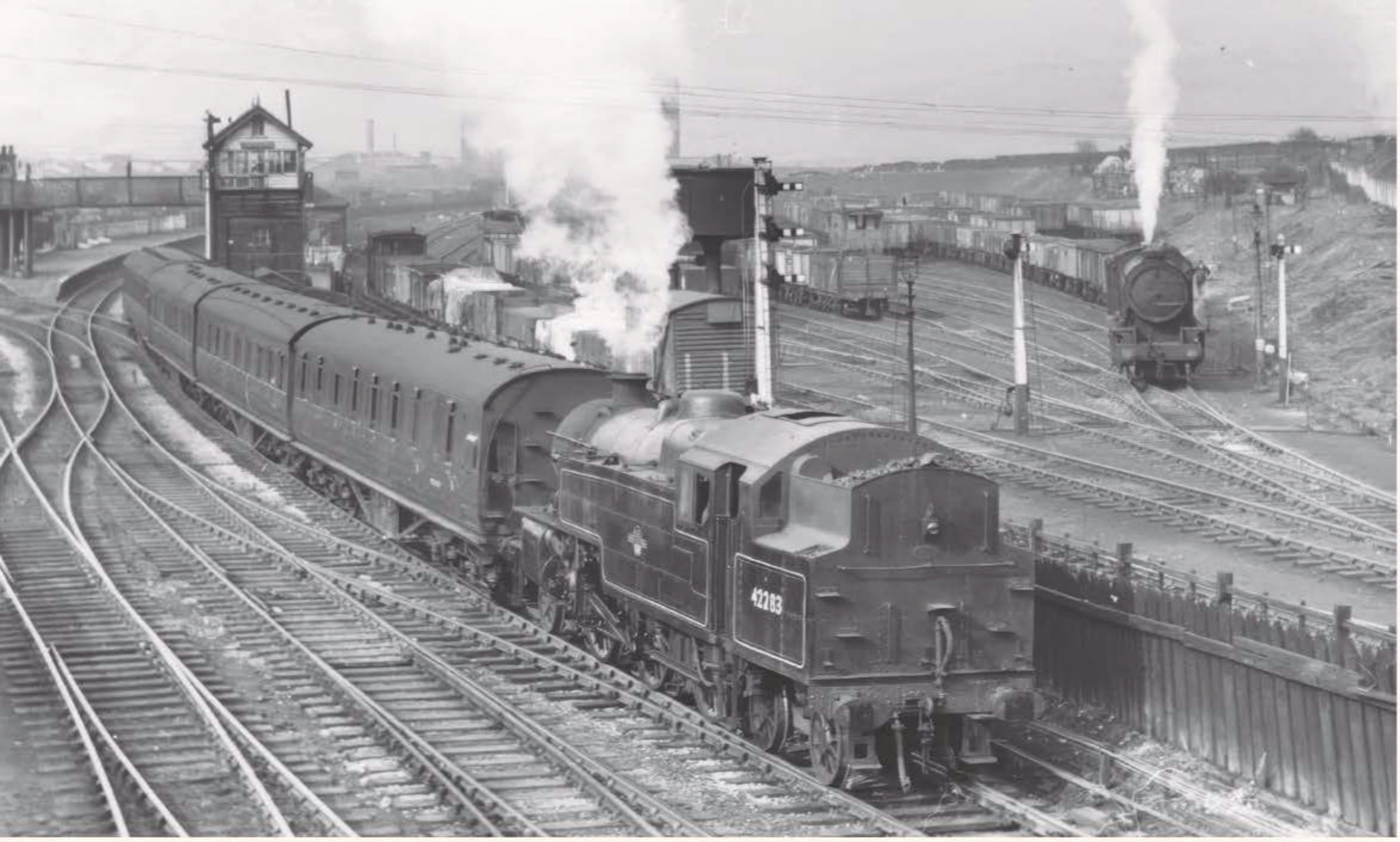
A MISCELLANY OF PASSENGER TRAINS

BY JEFFREY WELLS

The conveyance of passengers as a sole purpose of operating trains strikes back to 1830, when the Liverpool & Manchester Railway opened. The carrying of passengers as a paying concern really took off in the 1840s, the carrying of freight falling a close second in importance. The Liverpool & Manchester Railway went into the excursion business in 1830 by taking a party of 150 to Liverpool and running special trips to race meetings. On another occasion, the Leeds Institute arranged a visit of its members to Hull. Forty carriages carried 1,250 passengers. In another trip from Leeds to Hull in 1844, 6,600 passengers were conveyed in 240 carriages, not in a single train but in a succession hauled by nine engines. Such trains earned the sobriquet 'monster trains'.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 attracted thousands of visitors, many of whom came by excursion trains. The London & North Western Railway claimed that it had carried 90,000 people to the Exhibition.



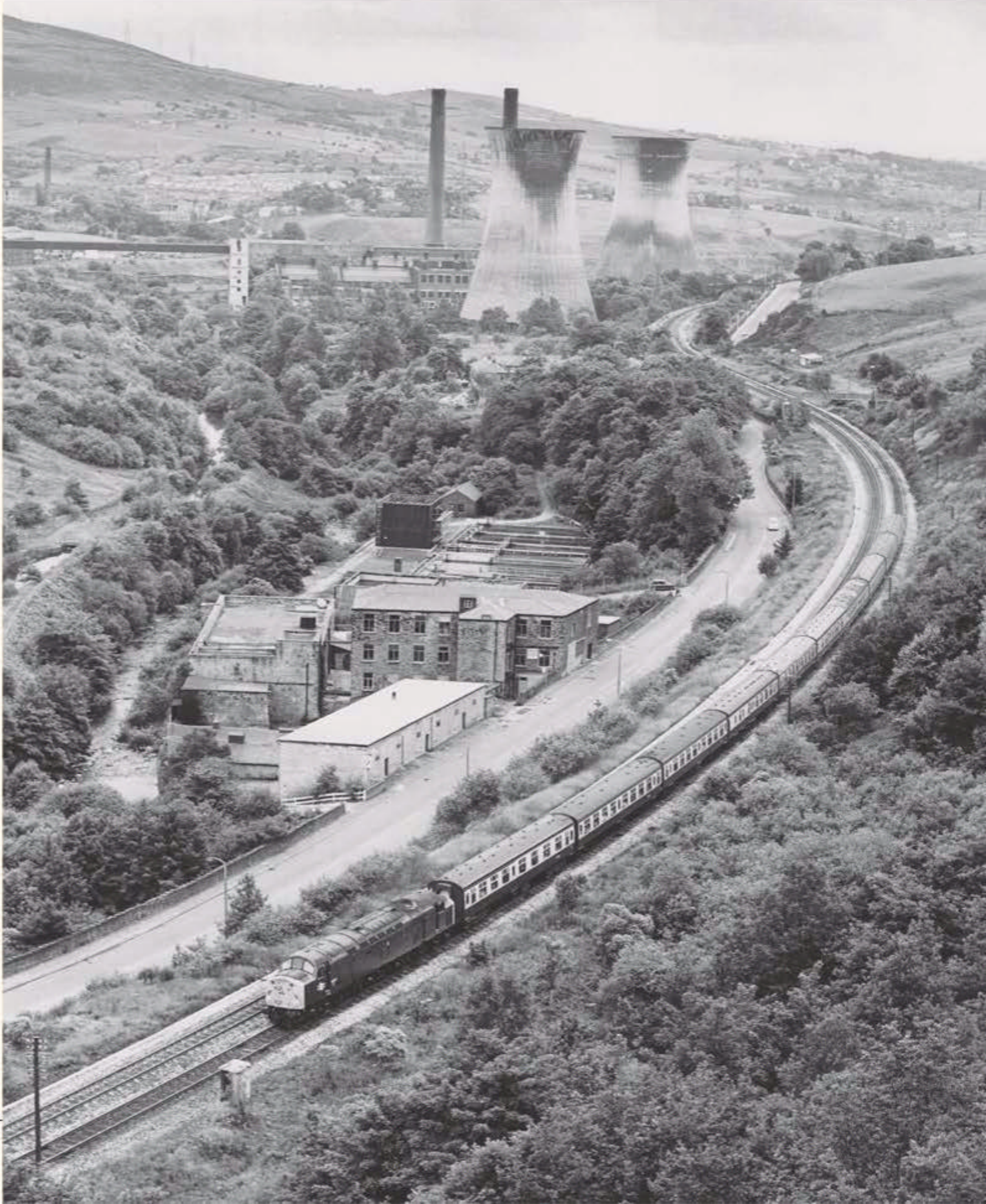


Royton Junction

There is a wealth of detail in this photograph, taken by Jim Davenport, the seemingly ubiquitous photographer who benefited from possessing a BR pass, which entitled him access to parts of the railway denied to others. Royton Junction station can be seen beyond the lofty signal box, which was endowed with the designation LY 247. The box was located on the up side of main line to the east of Shaw Road Bridge, 190 yards east of the previous box. It was demoted to a ground frame on 7th April 1966 and finally closed on 6th July 1967. The train is hauled by Fairburn Class 4MT 2-6-4T No.42283. A Stanier 8F blows off impatiently in the far siding, in charge of a rake of mineral wagons.

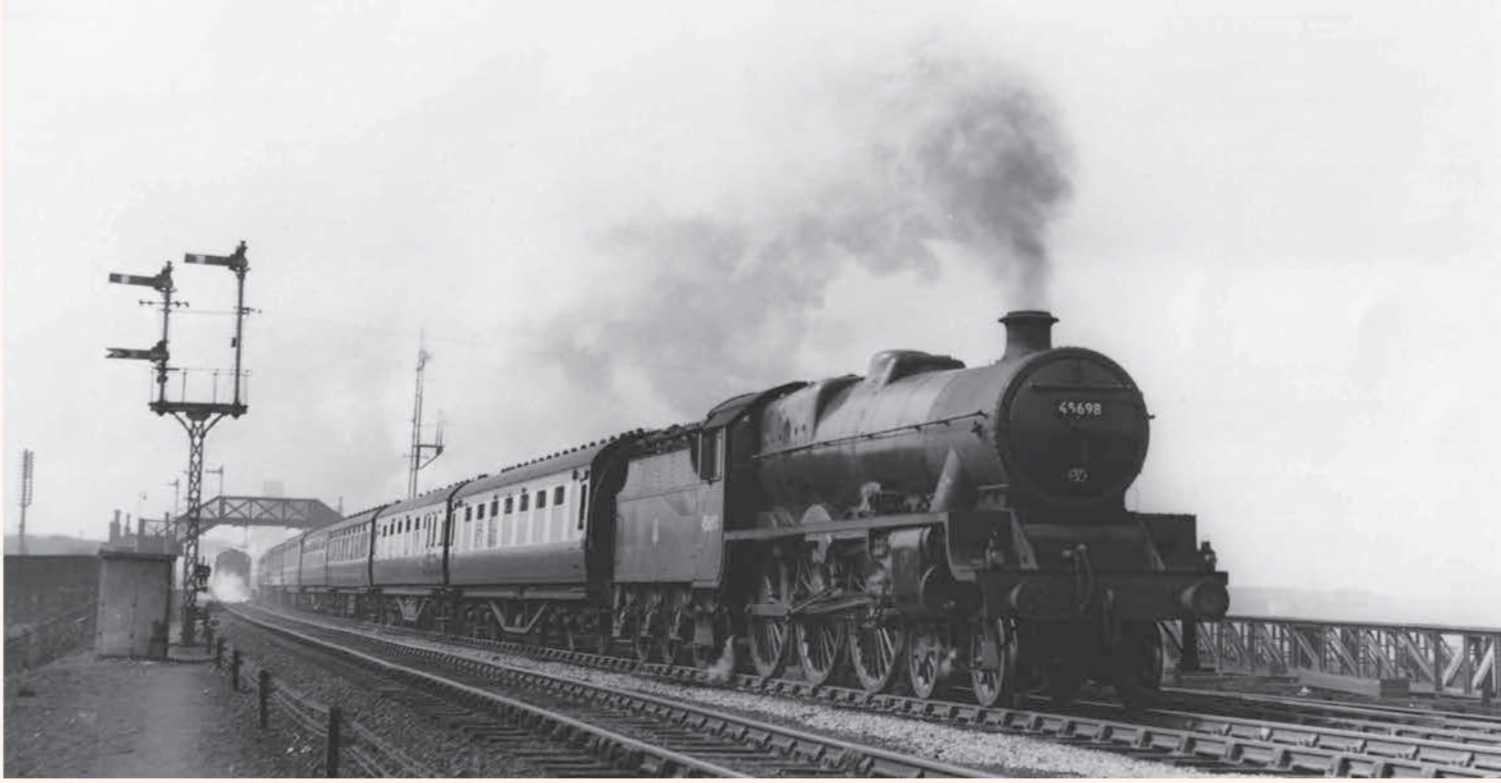
Workmen's trains, running very early in the morning and late at night, were first operated by the Eastern Counties Railway. In 1847 it ran workmen's trains from Canning Town to the Woolwich Ferry, which completed the journey across the Thames to North Woolwich.

Football was well catered for by nineteenth century railways. As early as 1879 Queen's Park, the Scottish soccer team, was able to reach Glasgow on Friday night, arrive in Manchester at 4.00am, play the game on Saturday afternoon and return to



Mossley

Dominating the sylvan scene in 1979 were the two cooling towers of Hartshead Power Station. The power station began generating electricity in 1926 for the sub-region Stalybridge, Hyde, Mossley and Dukinfield Transport and Electricity Board. Coal was delivered to the plant from Millbrook Sidings on the Micklehurst Loop line. Millbrook Sidings were laid in 1932 and could hold up to 130 12-ton wagons. Coal was delivered to the turbine building via an enclosed conveyor belt. Winding its way towards Mossley Tunnel is a Llandudno to Leeds return holiday train, full of glum end-of- holiday passengers hauled by a Class 40 No.40 037 on 7th July 1979. (Author's Collection)



Newton Heath ABOVE
LMS 'Jubilee' Class 4-6-0 No.45698 *Mars* has just passed through Newton Heath station, about two miles north of Manchester Victoria, en route to Liverpool with a train from Newcastle. The author frequently spotted *Mars* on this service, usually passing through Moston, about midday. The original timber station footbridge was replaced with a steel version c1955. The up line is occupied by a light engine making its way to the engine shed (26D). A faint outline of the concrete coaling plant can be discerned. (Arthur Bendall)

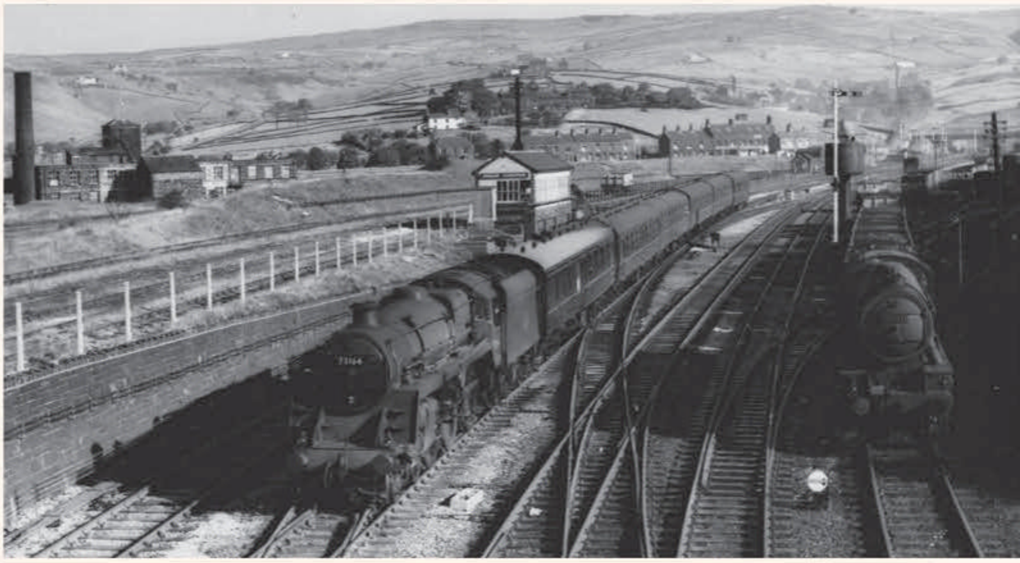
Glasgow overnight. In the 1880s it was not unusual for 10,000 people to arrive at White Hart Lane in London, to watch Tottenham Hotspur, in trains arriving at five-minute intervals.

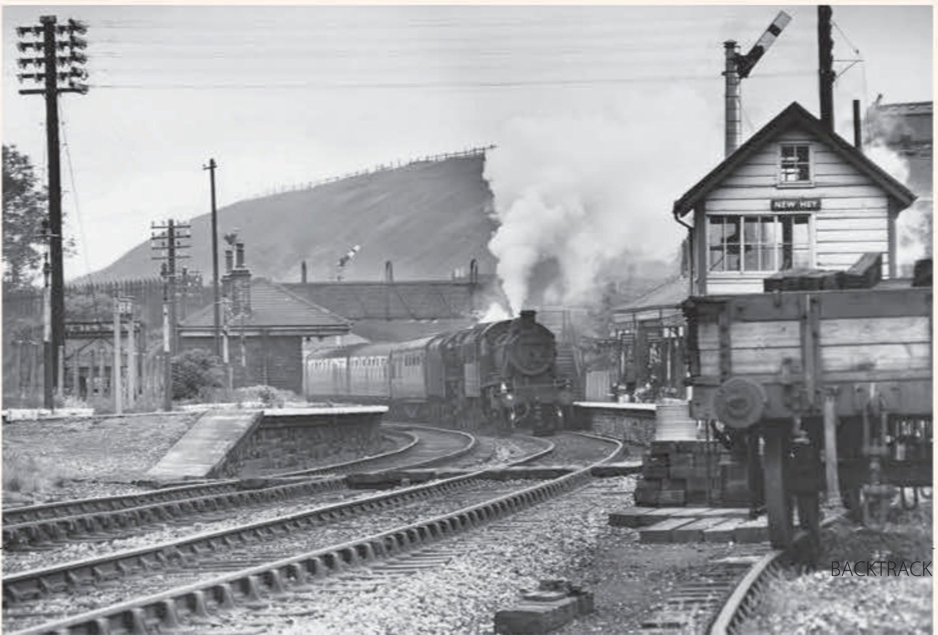
During the 1950s and 1960s passenger traffic included football specials, excursions, commuter traffic, local and long-distance passenger services and horse race specials. It was in the 1960s that the railway companies faced stiff competition from road haulage concerns, buses and trams.

This photo-study focuses upon an assortment of passenger traffic in districts lying within 30 miles' radius north of Manchester city centre.

New Hey (near Rochdale) RIGHT
The late Eric Bentley recorded very useful details to accompany his many photographs. In this instance, we learn that Eric took this photograph at 13.17 on Saturday June 25th 1966. Arriving at New Hey station is the Llandudno to Manchester Victoria extended to Oldham Mumps via Rochdale. Blowing off steam is leading engine Ivatt Class 2MT 2-6-0 No.46412 (9D Trafford Park); the second engine is 'Black Five' No.45352 (9E Buxton). New Hey station opened on 2nd November 1863. New Hey Signal Box (LY 213) was positioned at the south end of the up platform. It opened in 1887 and closed on 19th September 1967.

Diggle Junction (Saddleworth) BELOW
BR Standard Class 5MT 4-6-0 No.73164 draws a five-coach train past Diggle Junction signal box and heads towards Stalybridge. Hiding in deep shadow is an 'Austerity' 2-8-0 No.90671. Diggle Junction signal box opened in 1885, occupying space adjacent to the down slow line, to the west of Standedge Tunnels. The portal of the 1892 tunnel cannot quite be seen in the photograph. The high ground forming the backcloth to this scene is known as Standedge, about 1,450ft above sea level. Diggle lies in a remote location; it is the focus of railway route and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal route through the Pennines. (Jim Davenport)





Readers' Forum

Letters intended for publication should ideally add extra detail to our articles (or offer corrections of course!) and not be too long, consistent with the detail they offer. As always, we are sorry that space and time prevent us from printing them all or sending personal replies. ED.

Waggons roll

I think the railbus project stood little chance of success. Most towns had only one rail station, not always in the town centre. Many potential passengers would need a bus to reach it (Tring and Chester General are good examples), so they might as well stick to buses for the whole journey.

Donald Massey, by email

Sleaford's signal boxes

Whilst it was good to see and reminisce about the 29th May 1994 photographs of the four Sleaford signal boxes (February), I feel I must make the following comments on the text.

When trains were running it was impossible for Sleaford South signal box to be "switched out". This was because the 1 mile 11 chains single line from Sleaford East became double at Sleaford South and the latter was needed to control the connection and then work Absolute Block for the double line to Blotoft Siding signal box – 6 miles 72 chains distant. I suspect that when Peter Butler visited the box the line south of Sleaford East/Sleaford South to Spalding (excl) had closed as it was only open for one shift (Sundays no trains) until about 17.30.

It is not true that both Sleaford avoiding lines were out of use (caption to the photo). This certainly was the case in respect of the down line (from c1992), but not the up line. Admittedly the latter line (length 1m 77 chains) was very rarely used, but it officially remained operational, classified as a goods line with a trap point provided coming off the up line at Sleaford South. This meant when passenger trains were diverted off the East Coast Main line special authority had to be given to allow them to run over the up avoiding line. Sleaford North and Sleaford South used to daily open to each other (5-5-5) and close (7-5-5) even though most of the time there were no trains running directly from North to South

Charles Allenby, Malton

Army diesels at Bicester and Ten-Coupled

Whilst out shopping in Eccles this morning I spotted *Backtrack* in the local newsagents and so purchased a copy, especially as I noticed that you had included my one page look at Army diesels at Bicester. As ever the magazine looks like it is going to be a great read with lots of varied and interesting articles.

However, I'm emailing to let you know that I have made a slight *faux pas* with the caption to my photograph of the big Barclay 0-8-0DH at Bicester. In the caption it reads as having a wheelbase of 6ft 6in, whereas of course that should have been 16 ft 6in. My apologies for the error.

Whilst having a quick browse I also noticed the caption to another picture is a bit light in factual information, namely that of the rather nice shot of 9F No.92076 heading south through Oxenholme station which appears at the bottom of p98. The caption draws attention to cement but in fact this a picture of the empty ICI company train returning from the ICI distribution depot at Larbert to the ICI works in Northwich to collect a further load of soda ash.

Whilst some of the wagons in the train, such as the first and fourth wagons which are BR Presflos, and the second and third which are BR Prestwins, did indeed see much use in cement traffic, the fifth wagon, along with several others further back in the formation, are privately owned powder tanks which were on hire to ICI from STS for the carriage of soda ash, a chemical used widely by the glass and detergent industries. Indeed, although it is not that distinct the lettering on the side of the first powder tank and some nearer to the back of the train reads 'ICI' and 'SODA ASH'.

At the time of Gavin Morrison's photograph the Northwich to Larbert soda ash working had only recently been introduced and this mixed formation, including a few Presflo and Prestwin, was a distinctive feature of its consist for several months until the complete batch of STS-owned powder tanks had been built and introduced to traffic, whereupon the BR owned Presflos and Prestwins were reallocated to other uses.

The seventh wagon in the formation, another powder tank, and in a much lighter livery than the other powder tanks, was also an STS vehicle on hire to ICI for soda ash, its different livery marking it out as one of the two prototype powder tanks that had been constructed by Herederos de Ramon Mugica of Spain in contrast to the rest of the batch which were built by Pressed Steel.

I hope the above will be of sufficient interest to be of use on the letters page, and once again apologies for the mix-up over the wheelbase of the Barclay 0-8-0s where I managed to mislay ten feet!

David Ratcliffe, Manchester

Moorgate - 28th February 1975

I can add a couple of personal experiences to the author's article in the February issue, but first of all, a few issues on the history of the Great Northern & City Railway might be of interest. While as the author mentions, the original intention was to connect with the Great Northern and operate through services, as the two companies were unable to reach an amiable agreement, the new railway had to terminate in underground tunnels at Finsbury Park. The only physical connection between the two was via the GNR Highbury Vale sidings. The line opened on 14th February 1904 and was 3.42 miles long. On 1st July 1913 it was absorbed by the Metropolitan Railway and in 1938, after the formation of the London Passenger Transport Board, it was converted to accept normal tube rolling stock and managed as part of the Northern Line. When the decision was taken to use the tunnels the line occupied at Finsbury Park for the Victoria Line, from 3rd October 1964, the trains terminated at Drayton Park with a connecting bus service. After the maintenance depot at Drayton Park closed in 1966, there was a regular change-over of stock to and from Neasden, originally via Highgate and after the BR line from there to Finsbury Park closed in 1970, via the Widened Lines and King's Cross, on both routes using battery locomotives. In the early 1970s, when I was the Traction Maintenance Engineer and later Depot Manager at Finsbury Park Locomotives Depot, from my office window I used to enjoy watching the two battery locomotives, one each end of a six-car train rake of 1938 stock, running on up Cannonbury line, on their way to Drayton Park to make the change-over. The LT crew were piloted by King's Cross men who joined and left at King's Cross. When the accident at Moorgate occurred, we were asked by London Transport (LT) if we would make available, if required, some breakdown equipment, jacks, packing, pull-lifts, oxy-acetylene cutting equipment etc., to which end we loaded up a couple of our road vehicles. While in the event it was not required, a few weeks later we received a nicely worded thank-you letter from LT for our support. I think I am correct in saying, that after the accident and until the line closed in October 1975 for the BR conversion works, the trains continued to terminate at Old Street, the service to Moorgate never being reinstated.

I had an interesting experience later, while the line was closed for the BR conversion works, when I wandered over to Drayton Park and had a look at the maintenance depot. It was a complete time warp, with all the machinery, some of which, for example an ancient and quite large wheel late, left just as they had last been used. Even before this facility closed in 1966, I think that if any significant repairs were required, the vehicles were sent to Neasden. Certainly the wheel lathe had not been used for a very long time and in any event, would in all probability, not have been suitable for the tube stock. The whole was a very crude facility and completely open to the elements on the west side. I wish now I had had a camera with me.

Allan C. Baker, by email

Moorgate - Anatomy of a Railway Disaster by Sally Holloway, David & Charles 1988", should be included in any bibliography for the Moorgate catastrophe Wikipedia is also worth looking at.

There are strong parallels between Moorgate and the Sandilands tram disaster which occurred on London's Croydon Tramlink network ten years ago next year. Both accidents had gruesome outcomes, both drivers defeated deadman devices and both fell foul of fatal infrastructure which remains deadly today, perhaps more avoidably so at Sandilands than at Moorgate.

David Holt, Manchester

Another excellent issue arrived in my inbox a few days ago and the article by Stephen Roberts on the Moorgate disaster was of particular interest, not least as I could well have been on the 08.38 from Drayton Park that morning – I oorked in Finsbury Circus at the time and the Northern City Line was my 'back-up' route if the buses from Holloway Road to Moorgate were 'up the wall' as increasingly occurred with progressive one-manning of services. As it happened, all was well that day.

Although the reason for Driver Newson's failure to stop at Moorgate remains unexplained, especially as it took four days to recover his body from tunnel temperatures of around 120° F., my own belief, based on later personal experience, is that he suffered an episode of temporal lobe epilepsy, otherwise 'petit mal' between Old Street and Moorgate stations. Mrs. Holloway [*op cit* above] records that the tunnel lights had been left on after overnight PW work and it is known that the condition can be brought on by a sequence of flashing lights (hence warnings on TV about 'flashing images'). It is also known that the driver had had no breakfast but was waiting for his meal relief at about 09.00. Even first-occurrence epileptics, like diabetics, need regular meals more than unaffected people. A sudden episode can leave the victim with a mental 'blank-out' and totally unresponsive until it passes; in Driver Newson's case he was seen by people standing on the platform at Moorgate staring motionless straight ahead, hand on the controller, and subsequent examination by a senior London Transport engineer before the body was removed suggested that he had 'come to' perhaps a second or so before his train hit the end wall, but too late even to apply the brake before the impact. My own experience at home on Christmas morning, 2013, was that when taking a phone call from our daughter I paused, as I thought, for a few moments before resuming the chat but both she and my wife, who was with me, told me that I had remained standing motionless and unresponsive, still holding the handset, for some 45 seconds. Extrapolate that to the motorman of a train moving at 30mph and 30-45 seconds is a very long time. So while I have no evidence, I can only echo the sentiments of Ole Bill in a famous Great War cartoon: "If you know of a better 'ole, go to it."

George Moon, by email

The Manchester Locomotive Society

I much enjoyed Eddie Johnson's final article on the history of the Manchester Locomotive Society (February).

I was intrigued to learn that during the war years the Society met in the Briton's Protection pub in central Manchester. Unaware of its past connection with railway enthusiasts, the Liverpool Road Station Society's committee, of which I was Hon. Secretary, met there in the late 1970s. In that hostelry we organised an ultimately successful campaign to save the 1830 passenger station and goods warehouses and develop the Museum of Science and Industry on the site. In addition we celebrated the 150th anniversary with a six-week Great Railway Exposition.

I am pleased to report that Eddie's final book on the Manchester South District line will be published later this year by Platform 5.

Clive Luhrs, Perthshire

Only in America

Andrew MacLean (Readers' Forum, February) focuses on one aspect of my attribution of the 'blast pipe' to Timothy Hackworth. It is possible that parts of the text of the letter from Robert Stephenson to Samuel Smiles have been mis-transcribed – it is in part difficult to decipher/determine all the handwriting [Robert was at this time 53 years old and just two years from his death]. However, the whole of the letter amounts to a pleading of the case for his father, when claims were being made that George Stephenson only knew of the 'blast pipe' from a conversation with Timothy Hackworth at the Rainhill Trials. He sets out the various manners in which the exhausted steam was expelled from the locomotive. Culminating with "…there is no substantial advantage but only a convenience is obtained by bringing the two blast pipes into one."

It was the combination of exhausting the steam through a single orifice and centring the pipe in the chimney that had the impact on performance. Andrew MacLean is right to call me to account for what might be a transcription mistake, but ignores the supporting narrative in the letter. The whole document amounts to a 'silver bullet' and exposes the mistaken account of the 'blast pipe', the significant component generating the power required by the steam locomotive. Other evidence in 'Only in America' further confirms the considerable standing of Timothy Hackworth through his ingenuity and inventiveness. His invention properly understood remained an essential component of steam locomotives that moved the world. Something that Robert Stephenson was evidently hard pressed to countenance and fully comprehend.

Mike Norman, by email

BookReviews

|★★★★★ Excellent|★★★★ Very Good|★★★ Good|★★ Fair|★ Poor|

Changing Times, Changing Trains
Memoirs and insights on running railways

By Richard Brown. Published by New Generation Publishing, 2024. 339pp. Further details from: https://www.newgeneration-publishing.com Paperback ISBN 978-1-83563-362-5. Publisher's price: £14.99 paperback, £22.99 hardback, plus postage. Also available as an e-book.

What a rare experience it must have been to participate in epoch-making developments affecting our national railways over a period of 40 years. This was the good fortune of Richard Brown, set out in his fine new memoir. Unlike many of we recruits he had no previous experience or interest in railways and selected his career in the course of the annual recruitment 'milk round' at Cambridge in 1977. He was initially assigned to a succession of projects, though he notes that the ensuing years were less 'training', more a matter of industry familiarisation. These included reviewing the competitive position of Red Star Parcels and analysing the utilisation of passenger coaches. Later commitments included assignment to the InterCity sector, working on enhancing service quality as the competition was ever improving. Cutting costs was a permanent consideration to fulfil Government's requirements and by and large profitability was achieved until the process was cut short by privatisation. An interesting example of evaluating a problematic field of activity was a review of sleeping car services, almost all found to be substantially loss-making when their full costs were assessed. Expecting significant complaint, it was interesting to find that users – such as on the Stranraer and Barrow sleepers with their important political and industrial clientele – were placated by explanation of costs and earnings.

The author discusses in detail the evolution of management systems in BR, from the geographic 'Regions' set up as successors to the 'Big Four' railways, to the creation of business 'Sectors', which brought substantial savings and also brought top management closer to operations. When BR was abolished, to be succeeded by a plethora of successor enterprises, the creation of 'profit centres' was under way. At the time of publication, with the author as an informed external observer, another structure was in the course of creation in the form of 'Great British Railways'. But it is matter of record that every railway reorganisation since 1923 has had within it the seeds of another reorganisation.

From 2002 the author moved to become CEO of Eurostar, which it is fair to say had not fulfilled its promise. This was particularly difficult over the period when trains leaving London used existing 'boat-train routes' with low voltage dc traction. Although leisure traffic had built up steadily there was still reluctance by business travellers to take the train seriously. Attention to on-board standards, as well as imaginative revision of fare structures, eventually turned that corner. An engaging anecdote reports Eurostar staff promoting the trains by displaying signs and handing out leaflets at Heathrow until summarily ejected by airport staff. Underlying the operational uncertainties was a management structure described as "anarchic and highly dysfunctional…" A fascinating topic, little described before, is the process in 2007 of moving the London terminus from Waterloo to St. Pancras, as well as transferring to new maintenance facilities, all effected in a matter of days. An informative topic within Eurostar was experience of handling disruption, still far from resolved on today's railways. The sheer volume of traffic frozen by mishap makes the provision of alternative travel largely impossible, considering that a single Eurostar train has a load similar to that of five short-haul aircraft. Communication with users and the offer of generous compensation is the best course.

This memoir could have been a dry recital but it is enlivened by personal glimpses and anecdotes. As informed observers our readers will be aware of the attainments of BR but how revealing it is to understand the circumstances which lay behind the public face. This is an authoritative and readable account of changing times.

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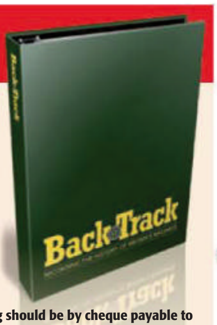

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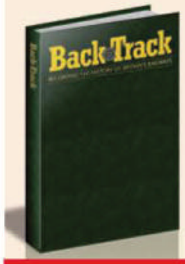

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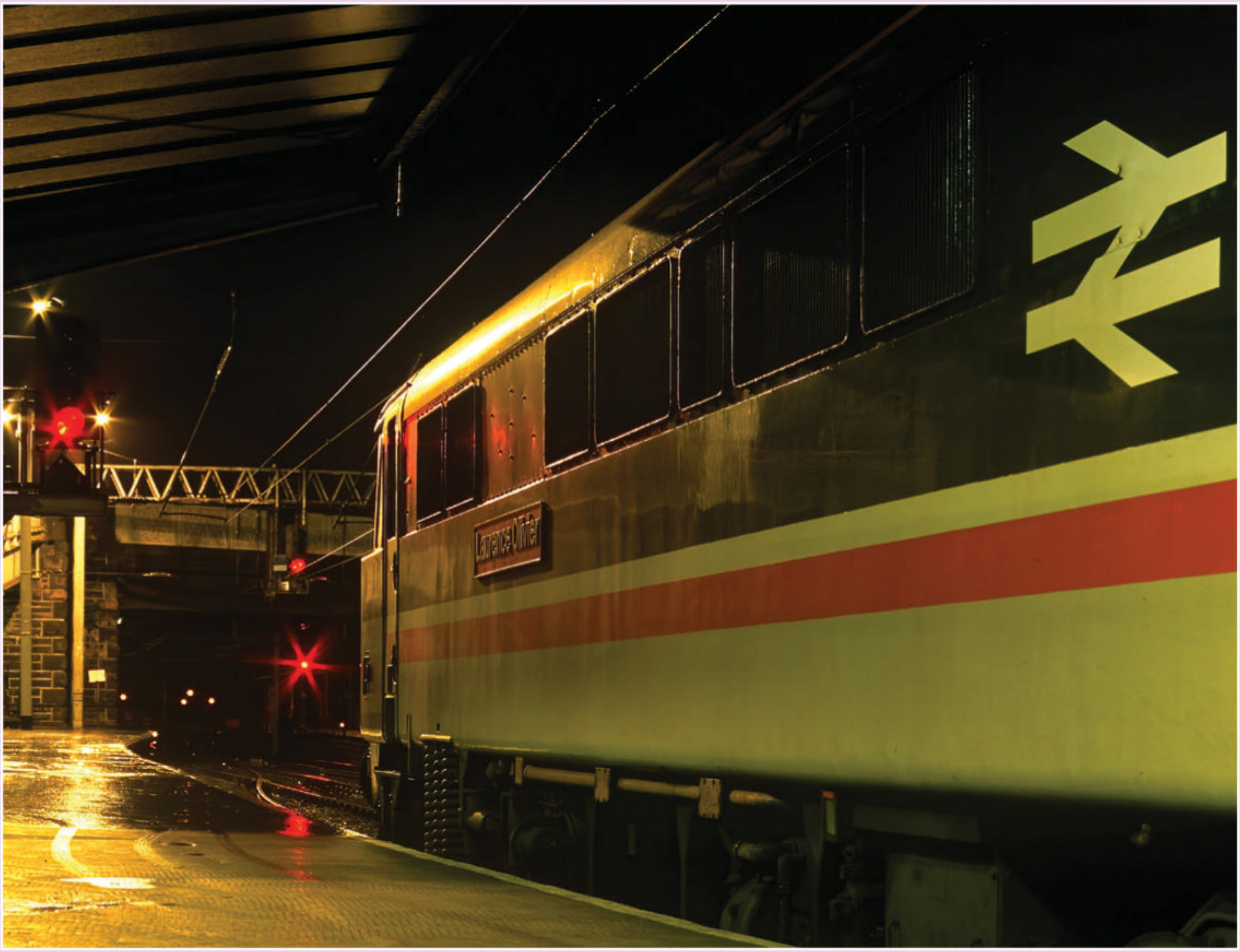

EXIT STAGE LEFT

Class 86 No.86 233 *Laurence Olivier* waits for the signal to change as the cue to leave this wet scene at Carlisle on 6th October 1989 and head north with the previous night's 20.35 London Euston–Glasgow Central Travelling Post Office train.
(Keith Dungate)

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